1995

Ethnic Community Involvement and Academic Achievement Among Vietnamese-American Secondary School Students: A Community Study.

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ETHNIC COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG VIETNAMESE AMERICAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A COMMUNITY STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Sociology

by
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August, 1995

Acknowledgements

Too many people have helped me with this dissertation to thank them all. Scott Feld, chair of my committee, has offered invaluable help throughout. Min Zhou, a committee member who has worked with me on projects related to this dissertation, has been a never-failing source of advice and assistance. Other committee members, Katharine Donato, Michael Grimes, and William Bankston, have been sympathetic and encouraging throughout.

Dr. Stephen J. Caldas, of the Louisiana Department of Education deserves special mention for his assistance in getting permission to administer questionnaires in the three schools in this study. Dr. Joseph Peccarerre, Mr. Tom Rigsby, Ms. Susan Weishar, Mr. Anthony Tran, and Ms. Susan Egnew are just a few of the people who have made this project possible.

I would like to thank, above all, the Vietnamese American people of New Orleans East, for their participation in this project and for their unique contributions to our country.

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine the role of involvement in an ethnic community in the academic achievement of Vietnamese American teenagers. I first describe the social context of these young people by discussing the situation of Vietnamese people in the United States and by offering a detailed description of a Vietnamese American community. Next, I examine how Vietnamese American students are performing in American schools and look at the characteristics of young people in the community in question. Finally, I employ data from a survey administered in the public schools of New Orleans where Vietnamese youth are concentrated in order to determine whether involvement in the ethnic community actually does contribute to the academic achievement of the young people and to examine how it might make this contribution.

I find that Vietnamese Americans in this community have formed tightly integrated and cooperative social relations, providing a small alternative society within a low-income neighborhood. These cooperative social relations facilitate advantageous social action, such as the development of home-ownership, self-employment, and the creation of civic organizations, including civic organizations specifically directed at improving the school performance of young people.

I also find that because this is a small alternative society in a relatively disadvantaged area, young people who are less involved with the ethnic community, or more marginal to it, tend to be more affected by the social problems that affect young people in American society than are those who are deeply involved with their own ethnic community.

In looking at school achievement, I find that those young people who are more involved with the ethnic community in a number of ways tend to do better in school. The data are consistent with the argument that the ethnic community appears to promote academic achievement to some extent because those who are more involved with the community have more access to its supports, but also because the more ethnically involved

students tend to less involved with the immediately surrounding disadvantaged segment of American society.

Introduction

This dissertation examines the role of ethnicity in the academic achievement of immigrant minority high school students. The specific question of interest is whether involvement in and identification with an ethnic community, as a form of social capital, can be seen as a major determinant of academic achievement. In other words, can an ethnic identity contribute to scholastic accomplishment, rather than, as assimilation theory would suggest, hinder the progress in school of members of a minority group?

Upward mobility depends on the resources individuals are able to use. Some resources, such as education or financial capital, may be individually held. But other resources result from systems of social relations, from the support, cooperation, and controls provided by groups of people. A system of social relations within an ethnic group may be such a source of resources.

Ethnic social relations may provide material resources, by providing a basis for pooling funds or providing low-interest loans to co-ethnics. But it may also provide intangible resources. Co-ethnics may provide encouragement and support. Living within closed social circles means that behavior can be highly constrained and that the approval or disapproval of co-ethnics takes on especial importance.

After discussing theoretical and methodological issues, I will set the stage for considering a particular Vietnamese community by describing Vietnamese Americans in general. Then, I will attempt a description of the Vietnamese community in question and of the place of young people in this community. Finally, I will look at the young people in this community and at what kinds of outcomes in the lives of young Vietnamese Americans are produced by varying levels of involvement with the system of relations in the ethnic community.

A Review of Theories of Immigrant Adaptation

The Assimilationist Approach

The dominant theoretical approach to immigrant adaptation tends to portray American society as a single, unified cultural and structural entity and immigrants as participants in other cultures and social structures and therefore outsiders. As the children of immigrants drop distinctive cultural traits, they gradually enter the social structures of American society achieve upward mobility. Thus, not only is the society of the U.S. unitary in this view, it is also a linear hierarchy, with outsiders at the bottom.

Robert Park's theoretical work on the "marginal man" produced some of the earliest thinking on the process of assimilation, especially on its social psychological aspects. In a seminal article published in the *American Journal of Sociology* (1928), Park argued that migration places individuals in the situation of being between two cultures, the original culture and the host culture. Those who are in this situation are "marginal" people, in a state of transition. Immigrant adaptation, in this perspective is bi-polar and consists of movement from one set of norms and expectations.

The idea that adaptation consists of gradually deserting older mental states and social behaviors in favor of newer ones has continued to affect sociological thinking on migration. Rivka Weiss Bar-Yosef, for example, characterized immigrant adaptation as "... a type of social situation characterized by the disintegration of the person's role system and the loss of social identity. The absorption process is then the successful resocialization, and the establishment of a new identity and role system" (Bar-Yosef, 1968: 27-28).

One of the earliest empirical studies of the benefits for young people "Americanization," of becoming insiders in the dominant culture was Irving Child's *Italian or American: the Second Generation in Conflict* (1943). Child found that the dilemma faced by young Italian Americans

was whether to discard the cultural heritage of their parents in favor of assimilating to American culture or to cling to Italian ways at the expense of upward mobility.

Milton M. Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* provided the classic statement of the view of immigrant adaptation as a process of discarding the norms, roles, and statuses of the an original country and adopting those of a newer country. Gordon saw immigrant adjustment to a new land as a matter of assimilation, of becoming less and less distinct from the host country and eventually losing most ethnic characteristics. He suggested that cultural assimilation is one of the first types of assimilation to occur. In other words, the loss of distinctive normative characteristics precedes political, socio-economic, and other forms of involvement in host country life.

Cultural assimilation, then is the essential first step. It may take place when no other type of assimilation occurs and it may continue indefinitely (Gordon, 1964: 77). Structural assimilation (that is, large-scale entrance into the institutions of the host society on the primary group level) follows cultural assimilation and provides the key to ethnic group members achieving the ability to participate fully in the host society. Prejudice and discrimination may take place when acculturation but not structural assimilation occurs, when an group takes on the cultural characteristics of the host society, but fails to gain acceptance from host society members (Gordon, 1964: 81).

Gordon believed that American society was not pluralistic in culture, but in structure: all groups had accepted or were in the process of learning to accept the same cultural assumptions, and remained distinguished from one another largely by the degree to which groups had achieved the acceptance of the dominant population (Gordon, 1964: 159). Because he saw cultural assimilation as a necessary first step, Gordon suggested that efforts of immigration-adjustment agencies should be directed toward acculturation and that American-born children in ethnic

enclaves should be viewed as on their way to complete acculturation, although not necessarily structural assimilation (Gordon, 1964: 243).

For Gordon, then, cultural assimilation was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for other forms of integration into the host society, such as upward socioeconomic mobility or intermarriage. More recent assimilation theorists have concentrated less on culture, than on other forms of assimilation that may provide access to the resources of the host society, such as residential assimilation. Thus, citing studies by Massey & Denton (1985) and Massey (1981) of the increased access to resources and socioeconomic gains associated with residential integration, White, Biddlecom and Guo (1993) have asserted that "... the degree to which an ethnic group is spatially assimilated determines in some measure the assimilation experience of that group along other dimensions" (pp. 94-95).

Whether they emphasize the adoption of majority culture or some other aspect of absorption by the host society, however, assimilation theorists tend to agree that the various aspects of minority ethnic membership are sources of disadvantage. New immigrants are initially disadvantaged by their status as outsiders or foreigners and are thus handicapped by such initial disadvantages as poor English language ability, non-transferable education and skills, lack of information about the larger society, and short duration of stay since arrival. In the early stages, immigrants tend to take one of two common paths: either to organize small-scale, family-based and low-wage ethnic sub-economies, or to find jobs that are located at the margins of the larger economy (Park et al., 1925; Hodge and Hodge, 1965; Piore, 1979). Through the passage of time and increasing contact with the majority group, immigrants will gradually become acculturated and incorporated into positions of higher status and greater advantage in the larger labor market.

As a result of this acculturation and incorporation, group members eventually lose both their unique cultural traits and desert the

residential concentration. This residential concentration is not seen as providing advantages or resources of its own, it is simply the bottom point at which economically disadvantaged new arrivals must begin. As economically successful group members move out, the original ethnic concentration is expected to diminish or to retain only a symbolic value (Sandberg, 1974; Gans, 1979). To the extent that it continues to exist, from this point of view , it will tend to be a continuously declining ghetto made up of only the least successful group members (Wilson and Aponte, 1985).

The Human Capital Approach

Human capital theorists cite individual human capital characteristics and selectivity of immigration to explain the adaptation of immigrants to a new socioeconomic environment. Human capital approaches do not assume that cultural assimilation is necessary for upward mobility, but they often include characteristics of the immigrant population related to assimilation, such as English language ability and length of residence. For example, Chiswick (1978), in his study of immigrant earnings patterns, found that after a certain length of time (approximately after 11 to 16 years) following immigration, male immigrant workers were able to achieve earnings parity with their native born counterparts.

Human capital theorists also do not see opportunities offered to immigrants by the U.S. labor market as necessarily limited to marginal employment. Immigrants with stronger human capital credentials can compete successfully in the larger economy. This is related to the fact that immigration to the U.S. is highly selective and the decision of potential immigrants to migrate is based on a rational calculation of loss and gain. U.S. immigration laws have been responsive to the internal labor market conditions. (Borjas, 1990).

Human capital models, then, are useful but incomplete explanations of immigrant outcomes. They tend to consider only individual skills. Human capital models, then, may explain the adaptation of some immigrant

groups, but this theoretical approach has difficulty in dealing with the apparent relative success of some immigrant groups with very little human capital. As we will see, the Southeast Asian refugees who have arrived in the United States since 1975, and especially those who have arrived since 1980 have little human capital with which to establish a basis for themselves or for their young.

The Social Capital Approach

The social capital approach to human adaptation to given environments places the emphasis on the patterns of social relations that exist within definable groups. Social capital is defined as closed systems of social networks inherent in the structure of relations between persons and among persons within a collectivity (Coleman, 1990; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993, Fernandez-Kelly, 1995). The essence of this approach is that a "dense set of associations" (Coleman, 1990: 316) within a social group can promote cooperative behavior that is advantageous to group members. Social capital is held by individuals by virtue of their membership and participation in groups. Adaptation does not result from isolated attributes of individuals, such as education or cultural characteristics, but from the structure of relationships among individuals.

The idea of social capital is not limited to explanations of immigrant adaptation, but it can be used as one explanation of why different immigrant groups show different rates of success in adapting to host societies. On the issue of education, Coleman cites evidence from Asian families that parental interest in children's learning can promote academic achievement even when the parents have little human capital. Moreover, Coleman finds that the stability and the strength of a community's social structure plays a vital role in supporting the growth of social capital in the family. Social capital in a community allows parents "... to establish norms and reinforce each other's sanctioning of the children (Coleman, 1990, p. 318)."

Recent research on non-European immigrant children has indicated that social capital within the family and the community, inherent in the social structures of some ethnic groups, can help generate human capital in the second generation (Coleman, 1988). Matute-Bianchi attributes the scholastic success of Mexican-American students to a strong identification with Mexican communities (Matute-Bianchi, 1986, pp. 236-240). Gibson finds that Punjabi students in California surpass the performance of their native white peers through the influence of their ethnic community by avoiding "becoming American" (Gibson, 1989). Similarly, studies on Indochinese refugees have found that aspects of Indochinese ethnicity, such as the family, and the ethnic community have promoted academic achievement among Indochinese children (Caplan et al., 1989; 1992; Gold, 1992).

I see the social capital thesis as a version of one of the oldest sociological theories, Durkheim's theory of social integration. Durkheim maintains that individual behavior should be seen as the product of the degree of integration of individuals in their society (Durkheim, 1951). The greater the integration of individuals into a social group, the greater the control of the group over the individual. In the context of immigrant adaptation, children who are more highly integrated into their ethnic group are likely to follow the forms of behavior prescribed by the group, such as studying or working hard, and to avoid the forms of behavior proscribed by the group.

The Segmented Assimilation Approach

Based on analyses of the changing nature of contemporary American society and of the changing nature of immigration, this perspective maintains that the benefits of "Americanization" depend entirely on what segment of American society absorbs new immigrants. It maintains, further, that since new immigrants are often absorbed into the least privileged segments of American society, "Americanization" may be a distinct disadvantage for the young of many, if not most, new immigrant groups

(Portes and Zhou 1993), as a result of the changing structure of the economy. From the segmented assimilation viewpoint, conditions that immigrants encounter today are quite different from those encountered by immigrants during the time that assimilation theories came into existence. Since 1965 have been mostly non-European who, because of dark skin color and non-WASP cultural origins, face racial barriers to entry into the white America. Moreover, the American economy itself has changed. The urban, industrial jobs that formerly provided immigrants with a basis for gradual upward mobility within the American working class have been disappearing from the economic landscape. These changes have resulted in the increasing concentration of an urban underclass in the traditionally immigrant-receiving cities (Kasarda 1983, Wilson 1987, Tienda 1989). American society has become "segmented," with largely suburban middle class suburbia on one end and deteriorating urban ghettoes, populated by a growing underclass disproportionately made up of racial minorities on the other end.

The "oppositional culture" that has taken root among the minority youth of the cities, perhaps best described in the ethnographic work of Elijah Anderson (1990) has become a response of frustration with an environment of increasing inequality. There is some disagreement about the historical causes of the underclass and its behavioral and cultural attributes. Wilson (1987) sees it as primarily a class, rather than a racial problem, created by the disappearance of urban jobs and the outmovement of middle class minorities from cities. Massey and Denton (1993) make a very convincing argument for seeing it as the result of conscious policies of segregation enforced by the white majority against black Americans. Nevertheless, the existence of an "oppositional culture" among urban minority youth, with negative consequences of its own has become widely accepted.

Structural changes in the American economy, the heterogeneity of contemporary immigrants, and the varied nature of American social

environments lead to varied consequences of immigrant adaptation. Post-1965 immigrants have come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and have encountered different contexts of exit and reception (Portes and Rumbaut 1990). While many new immigrants continue to head for traditionally immigrant-receiving cities to start their new lives on the margins of mainstream America, a noticeable number of newcomers are able to bypass ethnic immigrant communities and move directly into middle-class suburbs. For these newcomers, becoming "Americanized" may indeed lead to smooth adaptation and upward mobility. However immigrants who, as a result of a lack of human and financial capital, must settle first in central cities or other poor communities, may be affected adversely not only by deindustrialization but also by ghettoization. In this case, becoming "Americanized" may mean assimilation into the underprivileged segment of the society, which may trap young people in permanent poverty. If young members of immigrant groups are to assimilate into the American mainstream, namely the middle class, they may have to consciously avoid associating with underprivileged and ghettoized segments of American society.

As an alternative to the disadvantages of assimilating to a disadvantaged segment, immigrant groups may find it more advantageous to inculcate younger members with their own cultural traditions, increased solidarity, and cooperation within immigrant communities. In an ethnographic analysis of Mexican-Descent and Japanese-American students in a California high school, Maria E. Matute Bianchi (1986) found that students in the two ethnic groups had quite different patterns of adaptation. For Japanese-Americans, whose elders are generally well-educated and with middle class status, there is no need to maintain an identity separate from the mainstream culture. Among Mexican-descent students, on the other hand, many native Mexican American youth have developed "... a collective identity as a disadvantaged, disparaged minority group" (Matute-Bianchi 1986: 255). Academic achievement within

this group was often associated with avoiding membership in the American minority culture groups of "Cholos" and "Chicanos" in favor of cultivating a "Mexican-oriented" identity.

Other studies have yielded similar results. Gibson (1989) found that the outstanding performance of Punjabi children in a relatively poor rural area of Northern California was a result of parental pressure put on children to adhere to their own immigrant families and to avoid excessive Americanization. In the case of Haitian children in Miami, Portes and Stepick (1993) found that high achievers among Haitian youth tended to be those who rejected absorption into the local American society in favor of retaining an ethnic identity. However, because of close proximity to an inner-city black neighborhood and color barriers to participation in middle-class groups, most Haitian children were pressured into assimilating into the impoverished inner-city black culture at the cost of giving up the immigrant dream of economic mobility and a distinct cultural identity (p. 192). Further evidence for differing consequences of assimilation has been offered by Portes and Rumbaut (1993), who found that children in Miami and San Diego who had intact families and who associated with close friends whose families were coethnic immigrants tended to outperform their peers in school, suggesting that both strong family ties and ethnic bonds lead to better academic performance.

Clearly, there are close connections between the segmented assimilation view of immigrant adaptation and the human capital approach. Both are structural, rather than cultural approaches to human behavior, since both focus on the structure of social relations. A number of scholars, studying ethnic entrepreneurship, have found that ethnicity can provide a basis for cooperation leading to the successful establishment of businesses (Light, 1972; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Hurh and Kim, 1984; Min, 1984; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Waldinger et al., 1990; Zhou, 1992). Ethnic uniqueness, from this perspective, may be seen as a form of social

capital, a source of solidarity and trust that can facilitate economic activity (Portes and Zhou, 1992: 513-515).

The contribution of the segmented assimilation perspective to social capital theory is the recognition that the benefits of social capital, the existence of a cooperative system of relations within a social group, depend on the opportunities offered by the surrounding environment, and not simply on the relations within the group itself. When group members have human capital in demand in the surrounding environment (as, for example, in the case of East Indian or Filipino medical doctors), and when the surrounding environment is willing to admit these group members to more or less advantageous positions, it will not be necessary to rely on other group members. Middle class professional immigrants may, in fact, be hindered by adhering too closely to their own ethnic identities, since their rewards come from American society at large. However, when members of a group have relatively little human capital in demand by the surrounding society, and when they are in positions of relative disadvantage, the nature of the system of relations that exists among group members becomes crucial.

The Major Theoretical Perspectives and the Present Work

This dissertation draws on all of the theoretical perspectives discussed above, but it relies chiefly on segmented assimilation theory and social capital theory. In accordance with traditional assimilation theory, it maintains that members of an immigrant minority do need to adapt to the structures of the dominant society (in this case the school environment) in order to achieve upward mobility. However, it argues that those who cannot contribute to the upward mobility of their young through human or financial capital, can contribute through social capital, through providing sets of relationships that direct the behavior of young people into directions likely to lead to upward mobility. Thus, a tightly interknit ethnic community, by controlling the behavior of young people, can contribute to adaptation to larger social structures,

rather than detract from it. The value of this contribution depends, as segmented assimilation theory would suggest, on the surrounding environment. If the surrounding environment is a middle class neighborhood or an elite school, then young people may still derive benefits from participating in an ethnic network that provides social capital, as long as the ethnic network complements the advantages of the relatively desirable environment. However, if, as in the case of many new immigrants and most Vietnamese Americans, young people in a minority group find themselves in a disadvantaged segment of American society, the social capital provided by an ethnic group takes on critical importance. In this case, if young people assimilate to the surrounding society, they assimilate into poor, systematically disadvantaged segments of American society. Paradoxically, cultivating ethnic community ties, as a means of drawing on social capital, can help young people like young Vietnamese Americans to bypass some of the social problems created by the American socioeconomic system in the struggle to achieve upward mobility.

Issues of Approach, Methodology, and Organization

Reasons for Focusing on the Vietnamese Community of New Orleans East

The Vietnamese community chosen as the object of this study is worthy of study for a number of reasons. First, like any other phenomenon, it requires investigation and explanation. Just as a geologist may study an interesting rock formation without asking if it represents all other rock formations, a sociologist may legitimately choose to study any social phenomenon. Since this community has been identified as one of the largest concentrations of Vietnamese in the United States (Airriess and Clawson, 1994: 17), its characteristics and outcomes are legitimate subjects for sociological study. Second, since the Vietnamese in New Orleans and in other areas have been in the U.S. for such a short time, they share much in common, and we may reasonably expect that this study can yield findings that will apply to other communities. Third, the New Orleans Vietnamese community appears to have functioned as a model, in some respects, for other American Vietnamese communities.

According to Ms. Elise Cerniglia, who was Director of Resettlement and Immigration Services for Associated Catholic Charities in New Orleans in the mid-1970s when the Vietnamese began arriving, the U.S. Department of State initially pressured her to scatter the Vietnamese among members of other ethnic groups, as was the practice elsewhere in the U.S. Ms. Cerniglia, having earlier been in charge of resettlement of Cuban refugees, believed that refugees should be concentrated so that they could help one another. "I said, 'no, they need one another.' So, I started to resettle them in communities. That's why I looked for housing that could take large numbers of people. The Government saw the success and that's what they started doing elsewhere ... New Orleans was a pattern for other places, no doubt about it" (Cerniglia, personal communication, 3/31/94). It seems clear that since we are concerned here with investigating the contribution of a concentrated ethnic community

to the adaptation of its members, the New Orleans Vietnamese offer an especially relevant focus of study.

Finally, since I am arguing that degree of involvement in community relationships, as a social context for the adaptation of young Vietnamese Americans, is an important determinant of how young people function in the school environment, it is essential to look at young people within the context of a community, rather than as isolated individuals. This makes it necessary to choose and describe a specific community. Therefore, I have focused on this identifiable and influential community, describing first how the kinds of social relations within it can provide social capital for young people, then empirically examining whether young people who have greater access to this social capital actually do show higher levels of adaptation.

Reasons for Employing a Case Study and Review of Case Studies

Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg (1991) define a case study as "... an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon." It is by looking at one phenomenon from many different angles that the investigator is enabled to examine it in great depth and detail (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, 1991: 3).

These authors list several fundamental advantages in using the case study approach: "1. It permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action in natural settings studied at close hand. 2. It provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more holistic study of complex social networks and of complexes of social action and social meanings. 3. It can furnish the dimensions of time and history to the study of social life, thereby examining the investigator to examine continuity and change in lifeworld patterns. 4. It encourages and facilitates, in practice, theoretical innovation and generalization" (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, 1991: 6-7).

To these, we may add a fifth advantage, related to the first two, but important enough to be mentioned separately. A case study of a

community takes the social setting itself as an object of study. The information provided by surveys, the most frequently used method of social investigation, is information about individuals. I heartily acknowledge the value of this kind of information; indeed, I propose using survey data myself. However, if we are to argue that individual behavior and mental states are the result of living in a certain type of social setting, we cannot adequately interpret questionnaire responses without providing a description of the setting and a theoretical explanation of how this particular type of setting produces these particular responses.

Case studies of communities have a long history in sociology and they have furnished useful insights into the nature of social reality. Perhaps the most influential of all community case studies was Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown* (1929), a study of Muncie, Indiana that aimed at a description of an urban area as a single entity. *Middletown* was intended as an exploratory study, whose purpose was the discovery of the interconnections in an American urban environment. It was, in Werner and Schoepfle's term, a "holistic ethnography" (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987), whose purpose was to use a wide variety of methods to describe an environment, rather than to establish relations among variables.

The case study has been useful in the study of minorities and of youth. The kind of rich, in-depth information provided by field work in a particular social setting makes it possible to obtain information about the meanings participants attach to their behaviors, and to understand these behaviors in terms of the opportunities and limitations afforded them by their immediate social enviornments. Hollingshead's participant observation of working class youth (1949) provided insight into the actions of young people whose opportunities had been limited by social class. More recently, Elliot Liebow (1967) has been able to use his field work among members of an economically disadvantaged group of African Americans to challenge the notion of the "culture of poverty."

Case studies, then, have formed a valuable part of sociological work. It is true that case studies have lost the prominence they once had in sociology, largely as a result of the increasing domination of sociological inquiry by survey research. However, we may question whether this decline is due exclusively to the advantages of survey research. As Sjoberg, Williams, Vaughn, and Sjoberg note, much the growth in the popularity of survey research is due to the fact that it so neatly meets the requirements of contemporary commercial, academic, and governmental organizations for information about consumers and voters as isolated, independent, and equal units (Sjoberg, Williams, Vaughn, and Sjoberg, 1991: 46).

Seeing people as isolated units involves assuming away the social patterns that contain them, or assuming that the social patterns are the same for all of them. This is precisely why the case study is of such value in the study of sub-groups, such as deviant groups, groups that are substantially different in socio-economic characteristics from the mainstream, and distinctive ethnic group. Simply speaking, we cannot assume their social patterns are the same as those of the majority.

With regard to the Indochinese refugees, the presence of distinctive family and kinship relations have encouraged even U.S. Government researchers to engage in fieldwork within particular Indochinese researchers. David Haines, of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and his co-authors have produced a number of studies of Indochinese families and communities, and of how these have affected the resettlement process (see for example Haines, 1982, 1987; Haines, Rutherford, and Thomas, 1981).

While this study considers family as an important element in understanding how a specific Vietnamese community produces particular outcomes among its young people, it argues that these families exist within a wider set of social relations. In order to describe these social relations, it is thought advisable to use a more modest version

of the multiple technique approach used by the Lynds. If the argument is to be that involvement in a community produces certain types of positive behavior, it is necessary to provide an adequate description of the community before we test whether this is actually the case.

Methodology

In the present work, I am attempting to achieve two goals: first, to describe a particular ethnic community, and, second, to demonstrate that the social structures we see within this community are responsible for producing particular types of outcomes among the young people who grow up in it. For this reason, it has seemed appropriate to utilize both fieldwork and other methods.

Fieldwork:

My fieldwork actually began during four years living with refugees in a refugee camp, which enabled me to observe social structures they were bringing with them from Vietnam. It also, incidentally, provided the motivation for undertaking the present study. During this period, I also visited Vietnam in order to get some idea of the society and political and economic circumstances that these people, who would become Vietnamese Americans, were bringing with them.

Following my return to the United States, I worked for several months in 1990 as an English as a Second Language teacher with the Office of Refugee Services of Associated Catholic Charities in the very community under study here. This provided an invaluable follow-up. I was able to witness, in person, the entire process of fleeing a native homeland, living as uprooted refugees, and then reconstructing a Vietnamese community in the United States.

Many of the young people in this Vietnamese community have no memory of their parents' ordeals, and many of them, born in the United States, were actually not present for those ordeals. Therefore, my work with resettlement furnished a useful grasp of the community background, but it was insufficient for achieving insight into the situations of

contemporary Vietnamese American adolescents. To obtain this kind of insight, I managed to work inside the chief institution of American society that impinges on the lives of these young people, the public school system.

Throughout the Spring of 1993, with the help of Principal Joseph Peccarrere, I served as a substitute teacher at Marion Abramson High School, one of the two high schools attended by the majority of New Orleans Vietnamese students. During this time, I was able to observe the general situation of the school environment, to interview numerous teachers, and to establish personal contact with many Vietnamese American young people. One young man, a computer enthusiast, even conversed with me regularly by email. I was also able to attend Asian Club Meetings on a regular basis at Abramson, and I attended ceremonial events, such as the Vietnamese New Year's celebration at both Abramson and at Reed, the other school attended by the majority of Vietnamese high school students.

The administration at Reed was not as cooperative as the administration at Abramson, but I was able to visit the school on a number of occasions to interview teachers and students, and I also made contact with students at Reed during after-school hours. Several of the students I talked to put me in touch with the parents, although it was generally easier to talk with fathers than it was with mothers, since Vietnamese families often see the father as more or less the official family spokesman.

Throughout the summer of 1994, I worked as a volunteer with the *Dung Lac* Youth Services Program that was then being created by the Office of Refugee Services of Associated Catholic Charities to help high school dropouts and other "at risk" young people. My work primarily consisted of overseeing athletic and recreational programs, and it provided ample opportunities to observe and converse with troubled adolescents.

It should be pointed out that I was never an "insider" to the Vietnamese community or to the young people during any of this fieldwork.

I am neither Vietnamese, nor am I an adolescent. As a teacher, I had a part to play that was recognized both by the students and by parents and community members, but I was at all times seen as an authority figure (if, I hope, at times a trusted one), or as someone who was studying the Vietnamese community.

In addition to these forms of observations, I also conducted interviews with parents, community leaders, officials of Associated Catholic Charities, and others who work with the Vietnamese community in New Orleans. These were unstructured interviews, because I felt that unstructured interviews would give me greater freedom to explore the history and structure of this community and the experiences of those inside it and of those who have worked with community members.

Written Records:

I supplemented my fieldwork with reports on the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East, dating back to the community's founding in 1975. These came primarily from the *Times Picayune*, the primary newspaper of the New Orleans area. Newspaper reports are not sources of information, they also reflect the impact a new community has made on the surrounding mainstream and reflect how the surrounding mainstream society has viewed the minority community.

Existing Sources of Statistics:

To obtain objective characteristics of this community, I made extensive use of Census data, from both the full U.S. Census of Population and Housing of 1980 and 1990, and from the 1990 5% Public Use Micro-data Sample (PUMS).

For a cursory look at the characteristics of Vietnamese students and those of their non-Vietnamese schoolmates, I was able to obtain results of the Graduation Exit Examination, which must be passed by all Louisiana public high school students in order to graduate. The GEE, also, provides an external check on the validity of some my survey findings on Vietnamese high school students. Until 1991, the Graduation

Exit Examination provided socioeconomic data on parents of students, as well as examination results alone, so I have made use of the 1990 GEE results.

A Survey of Vietnamese American Students:

After I describe the community setting, I focus much more closely on the high school students themselves, in Part II and then I look specifically at the claim that community involvement is related to how well these students do in school. The hypothesis that higher levels of community involvement lead to greater academic achievement was tested by means of a survey. Achievement was measured by items on the survey that asked students about present performance and plans for future performance. Present performance, as suggested above, may be considered as a matter of grades and study habits.

I prepared the questionnaire from my experience working on a previous survey in this neighborhood, on observations in the relevant schools, and on the interviews with people in the community. This instrument was pretested at Ehret High School, on the West Bank of Jefferson Parish, in November, 1993, when the questionnaire was administered to 88 Vietnamese high school students. After they completed the questionnaire, I discussed it with them, in order to determine the effectiveness of the questions, and made some slight alterations in the design. During the first week in March, 1994, I administered the survey to Vietnamese high school students at Abramson High School and Sarah T. Reed High School, with 204 students completing the survey at Sarah T. Reed and 183 students completing the survey at Abramson. In May, 1994, it was administered to the few Vietnamese students at Benjamin Franklin High School, an elite public high school for honors students that admits selected students from all of Orleans parish. Fifteen Vietnamese students at this school completed the questionnaire. The 402 students who completed questionnaires represent an estimated 75% of all Vietnamese high school students in this community. According to Earl

Babbie, in survey samples, "... a response rate of at least 50 percent is *adequate* for analysis and reporting. A response rate of 60 percent is *good*. And a response rate of 70 percent is *very good*" (Babbie, 1992: 267). For this survey, I was able, as a result of administering the instrument in the schools under controlled conditions to obtain a response rate of 75% not just from a sample, but, in a sense, from the entire population under consideration here.

The Appendix gives the survey instrument used in the schools. The 60 items included in the instrument were intended to function as indicators of ethnic community involvement, types of peer group associations, degree and kind of association with members of other ethnic groups, family background, parental involvement in the community, parental involvement in the educational activities of students, students' orientation toward future education and occupation, and students' current academic achievement. The first four questions were intended to get some basic information about students. Question 5, regarding attitudes toward college attendance was the first question about the scholastic orientation of students.

Religious involvement is an important dimension of community involvement, particularly for people in this neighborhood, and questions 6 & 7 were intended to tap into this dimension. Question 8 was intended to determine the future occupational orientation of students. Questions 9 through 20 examined different aspects of identification with and involvement in the Vietnamese community and the extent of association with members of other ethnic groups. Questions 21 through 23 looked at students' participation in classes offered by the Vietnamese community after school, and therefore considered to what degree students were integrated into the formal structures organized by the Vietnamese community to promote educational achievement.

Questions 24 through 27 and question 35 were included to provide multiple indicators of how well students did in school. Questions 28

through 34 were intended primarily to examine homework habits. Question 28 deals with whether students approach their schoolwork on an individual basis, or with a peer group (many of the teachers I interviewed observed that the best Vietnamese students frequently form study groups and help each other in their work). The questions about brothers and sisters were included because some researchers (see Caplan et al., 1991) have found a relationship between sibling cooperation and academic advancement.

The items concerned with taste in activities, music, and grooming can serve as indicators of peer group association and of different aspects of their society. Similarly, the items concerned with experiences of the students and of their friends can tell us about how successful the students and their peer groups are adapting to American society.

Questions 49 through 57 dealt specifically with family structure, parental background, degree of parental integration in the community, and time spent working outside the home by parents. These questions, among other things, enabled me to examine empirically the assertion that parents promote the successful adaptation of their children not simply through communicating values, but by connecting the children to a system of community supports. At the same time, these items made it possible to look at some of the fairly common theoretical explanations for the relative scholastic success of children (the "broken-family" explanation, parental socioeconomic background, the "latch-key children" explanation).

The last three questions posed hypothetical situations in order to see how students might respond to means-end dilemmas; that is, to what extent they appear to value scholastic performance as a goal in itself, over accepted means of achieving those goals. I have not used all of the items in this survey in the present work.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into three parts. This is done in order to describe the broad social context affecting the young people, to look more closely at their specific context, and to test hypotheses.

Part I of this dissertation will describe the community as a social context that influences the adaptation of its young people. First, I will situate this community in the broader setting of Vietnamese settlement in the United States by describing the historical events leading to the creation of Vietnamese America, and by describing characteristics of Vietnamese Americans. I will note, in particular, the rise of Vietnamese American communities and the scholarly attention that these communities have provoked.

Having offered a brief description of Vietnamese America, I will then narrow the focus to the particular community under study. I will describe its formation and geography, and then its economic and social structure. This description should clarify the social resources the community can offer to young people, and show how it can act as a system of support, rather than a hindrance to adaptation to American society.

Part II will narrow the focus even further. It will describe the students of this community. I will describe the adaptation of young Vietnamese Americans in general in order to establish the chief question about Vietnamese American students: why do they do so well? Then, I will look at characteristics of the Vietnamese students in this community, and demonstrate that they also exhibit the high levels of academic achievement of Vietnamese Americans in general. I will look in particular at how gender roles influence Vietnamese American students and lead to particularly marked scholastic performance on the part of young women.

Part III will use survey data to deal with the empirical question of how involvement in the ethnic community promotes scholastic performance on the part of young people.

Part I: A Description of the Social Context

Chapter 1. The Vietnamese in America

Immediate Historical Background

Before 1975, there were almost no Vietnamese people in the United States, but the destinies of Vietnam and the U.S. became increasingly intertwined during the 1950s and 1960s, and this was to lead to the Vietnamese becoming one of the largest of the Asian American groups. The American government began to show an interest in Vietnam during World War II, when it gave supplies and other forms of assistance to Ho Chi Minh's anti-Japanese forces. After the war, however, containment of international Communism became the primary foreign policy objective of the U.S., and the Americans became increasingly dedicated to preserving the anti-Communist South Vietnamese government of Ngo Dinh Diem in order to keep the North Vietnamese from taking over the whole country.

Diem, a Catholic, relied heavily on South Vietnamese Catholics and on the large numbers of Catholic refugees from the north. This created resentment in the Buddhist majority, which created opportunities for the North Vietnamese-supported insurgents, who organized themselves as the National Liberation Front and became known as the Viet Cong. Many volunteer agencies based in the U.S., including CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Services, and others, became active in South Vietnam in the 1950s in response to the social disruption of war, so that the people of South Vietnam began to become acquainted with Americans and American culture.

In 1961, President Kennedy sent military advisors to South Vietnam to assist the beleaguered Diem government. However, Diem became increasingly unpopular in his own country. In 1963, a military coup overthrew Diem, apparently with the knowledge and consent of the American Embassy. The new leaders of South Vietnam proved less able to maintain control than Diem and by 1965, with the South Vietnamese government on the verge of collapse, President Johnson sent in ground troops. American military and political leaders apparently believed that they were winning

the war through the end of 1967. At the beginning of 1968, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops launched the Tet offensive, which convinced American leaders that victory, if possible at all, would not be quick or easy. It also increased opposition to the war on the part of the American public. In 1973, the Paris peace talks ended with the United States agreeing on a timetable for withdrawing its troops and turning the war over to the South Vietnamese army. The South Vietnamese government was no better prepared to defend itself than it had been in 1965, and in April 1975, Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, fell to an invasion of North Vietnamese troops.

Vietnamese Settlement in the United States

On April 18, 1975, less than two weeks before the Fall of Saigon, President Ford authorized the entry of 130,000 refugees from the three countries of Indochina into the United States, 125,000 of whom were Vietnamese (Haines, 1989: 3). This first large group of Vietnamese in America has become known as "the first wave." Those in this group were mostly people who had had close ties with the American military in Vietnam, and they therefore tended to come from the elite of South Vietnam. According to data collected by the U.S. Department of State in 1975, over 30% of the heads of households in the first wave had backgrounds in the medical professions or in professional, technical, and managerial occupations. 16.9% were in transportation occupations and 11.7% were in clerical and sales occupations. Only 4.9% were fishermen or farmers, which are the occupations of the majority of people in Vietnam. (Montero, 1979: 23) Over 70% of the first wave refugees from this overwhelmingly rural nation had come from urban areas (Montero, 1979: 23-24).

During the months of April and May 1975, six refugee camps opened in the U.S. to receive refugees and prepare them for resettlement. After refugees had been interviewed, given medical examinations, and assigned to living quarters, they were assigned to one of nine voluntary agencies,

or VOLAGs. These VOLAGs, the largest of which was the U.S. Catholic Conference, had the task of finding sponsors, individuals or groups who would assume financial and personal responsibility for refugee families for up to two years (Montero, 1979).

Despite the fact that many first wave arrivals were from privileged backgrounds in their native country, few were well-prepared to take up a new life in America. The majority lacked adequate skills in English and all found themselves suddenly in the midst of a strange culture. The American refugee agencies attempted to scatter them around the country, so that this new Asian population would not be too visible in any one place, and so that no one city or state would be burdened with caring for a large number of new arrivals. Nevertheless, although 29 states each held at least 1% of the Southeast Asian population in 1976, California had already become home to the largest number of refugees, with 21.6% of all the Southeast Asians in the U.S. (Haines, 1989 4-5).

The large first wave was followed by smaller numbers, with only 3,200 Vietnamese arriving in 1976 and only 1,900 arriving in 1977. Vietnamese coming to the United States increased dramatically in 1978, to 11,100, as a result of an enlarged resettlement program developed in response to the lobbying of concerned American citizens and organizations (Haines, 189: 3). Political and economic conditions in Vietnam at this time were driving large numbers of Vietnamese to leave their country at this time, often in small unseaworthy boats. News of their hostile reception in neighboring countries and of their sufferings at the hands of pirates created pressure in the U.S. to expand the refugee program still further. Then, in January 1979, Vietnam invaded neighboring Cambodia and the following month war broke out between Vietnam and China. As a result, in 1979 the number of Vietnamese admitted to the U.S. rose to 44,500. Many of these were ethnic Chinese citizens of Vietnam. As the war continued, the number of fleeing Indochinese rose steadily. Many of these were Cambodians or Laotians, but Vietnam, with its larger

population, remained the source of the majority of refugees. In 1980, 167,000 Southeast Asians, 95,200 of whom were Vietnamese, arrived in the U.S. In 1981, they were followed by 132,000 Southeast Asians, 86,100 of whom were Vietnamese (Haines, 1989: 3).

These 1980-1981 arrivals are referred to as the "second wave." (The division into "first wave" and "second wave" is not precise: sometimes "the first wave" is used to refer to all those who arrived before 1980 and the "second wave" is used to refer to all those who arrived in 1980 or later) Unlike the first wave refugees, they were overwhelmingly from rural backgrounds and were usually limited in education. Indeed, they appear to have been the least educated and the least skilled of any legal immigrants to the United States in recent history. Their hardships were increased by their time of arrival: 1980 was a year of high inflation rates, and 1981 to 1983 saw the most severe economic recession in the previous fifty years (Tollefson, 1989: 8-12).

While first wave refugees had come directly to the U.S., those in the second wave tended to come through refugee camps at various places throughout Southeast Asia. Agencies under contract to the U.S. Department of State organized classes to teach English to familiarize refugees with American culture. VOLAGs still had the job of finding sponsors prior to resettlement, but these sponsors were usually found before departure for the U.S.

The number of Vietnamese and other Indochinese coming to the U.S. never again reached the high points of 1980 and 1981. However, the influx did continue, with roughly 23,000 or 24,000 Vietnamese reaching America every year through 1986. Many of those leaving Vietnam for the United States in the 1980s emigrated legally through the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) (Tollefson, 1989: 8-12). This was a program agreed upon by the governments of the United States and Vietnam, in spite of the fact that there were no formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, that allowed those interviewed and approved by U.S.

officials in Vietnam for resettlement in America to leave by plane, with their Vietnamese passports. Two of the groups that the U.S. was particularly interested in were the former South Vietnamese soldiers, who were in prisons and re-education camps, and the Amerasians, the roughly 8,000 children of American fathers and Vietnamese mothers who had been left behind at the end of the war (Tollefson, 1989: 11). Although an estimated 50,000 Vietnamese were resettled in the U.S, through the Orderly Departure Program between late 1979 and 1987, refugees also continued to pour out of Vietnam by boat and on land, across war-torn Cambodia to Thailand.

By the early 1980s, secondary migration had made the Vietnamese American population more concentrated than it had been in earlier years. As I have mentioned above, the initial goal of U.S. refugee resettlement policy was to scatter Indochinese refugees as widely as possible, in order to decrease their impact on American communities and to speed their assimilation. However, as Christine Finnan and Rhonda Ann Cooperstein noted in an executive summary for the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Department of Health and Human Services, "over time, considerable secondary migration occurred as refugees moved to be with other Southeast Asians (primarily friends and relatives) and to seek localities with better job opportunities and more agreeable climates" (Finnan and Cooperstein, 1983: 1). While California had always been home to the greatest number of people from Southeast Asia, by 1984 over 40% of all refugees were located in California, mostly in the large urban centers. Texas, the state with the next largest number of Southeast Asians, held 7.2%. (Haines, 1989: 4). This trend toward concentration continued, so that the 1990 Census showed 46% of Vietnamese living in California, and a little over 11% living in Texas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992).

Table 1.1 gives distributions of Vietnamese in the various states in 1980 and 1990 and Figure 1 shows distributions of Vietnamese Americans by state in 1990. At the state level, the Vietnamese population remains

Table 1.1. Distribution of Vietnamese Americans in the United States by State.

State	1980	%	1990	%
Alabama	1,333	.51	2,274	.37
Alaska	383	.15	582	.09
Arizona	1,932	.74	5,239	.85
Arkansas	2,051	.78	2,348	.38
California	89,601	34.23	280,223	45.60
Colorado	4,026	1.54	7,210	1.17
Connecticut	1,825	.70	4,085	.66
Delaware	205	.08	348	.06
D.C.	505	.19	747	.12
Florida	7,600	2.90	16,346	2.66
Georgia	2,294	.88	7,801	1.27
Hawaii	3,463	1.32	5,468	.89
Idaho	429	.16	600	.10
Illinois	7,034	2.69	10,309	1.68
Indiana	2,338	.89	2,467	.40
Iowa	2,476	.95	2,882	.47
Kansas	3,690	1.41	6,577	1.07
Kentucky	1,090	.42	1,506	.25
Louisiana	10,884	4.16	17,598	2.86
Maine	465	.18	642	.10
Maryland	4,131	1.58	8,862	1.44
Mass.	3,172	1.21	14,449	2.51
Michigan	4,209	1.61	6,117	1.00
Minnesota	5,866	2.24	9,387	1.53
Mississippi	1,281	.49	3,815	11.62
Missouri	3,179	1.21	4,380	.71
Montana	275	.11	159	.03
Nebraska	1,438	.55	1,806	.29

(Table con'd)

State	1980	%	1990	%
Nevada	1,124	.43	1,934	.31
New Hampshire	209	.08	553	.09
New Jersey	2,884	1.10	7,330	1.19
New Mexico	1,043	.40	1,485	.24
New York	6,644	2.54	15,555	2.53
North Carolina	2,391	.91	5,211	.85
North Dakota	283	.11	281	.05
Ohio	3,509	1.34	4,964	.81
Oklahoma	4,671	1.78	7,320	1.19
Oregon	5,564	2.13	9,088	1.48
Penn.	9,257	3.54	15,887	2.59
Rhode Island	314	.12	772	.13
South Carolina	1,072	.41	1,752	.29
South Dakota	386	.15	268	.04
Tenn.	1,391	.53	2,062	.34
Texas	29,112	11.12	69,634	11.33
Utah	2,108	.81	2,797	.46
Vermont	85	.03	236	.04
Virginia	10,000	3.82	20,693	3.37
Wash.	9,838	3.76	18,696	3.04
West Va.	253	.10	184	.03
Wisconsin	2,249	.86	2,494	41
Wyoming	167	.06	124	.0[illegible]
Total	261,729	100.00	614,547	100.00

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980 and 1990

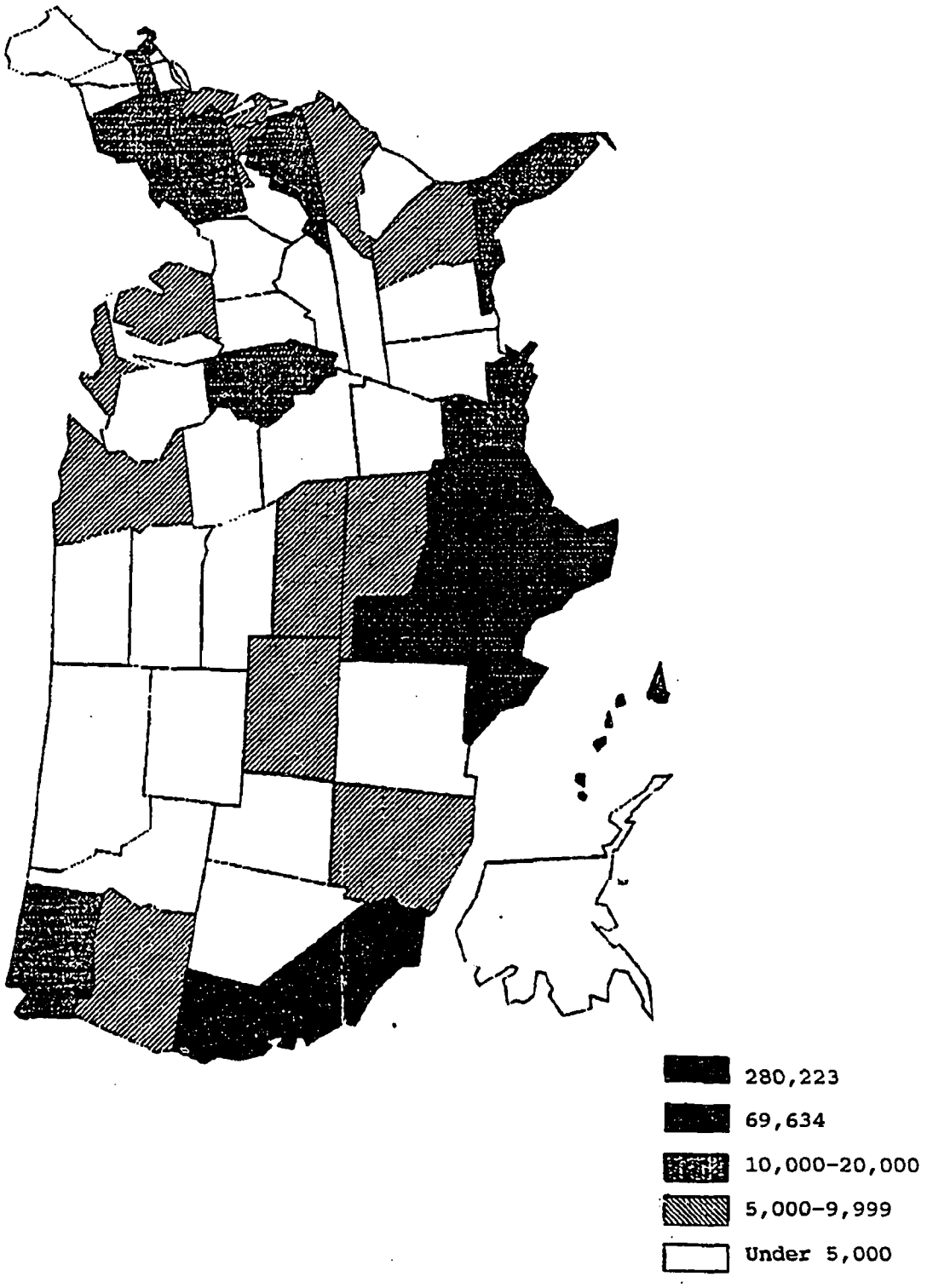

Figure 1: Distribution of Vietnamese Americans by State, 1990.
Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

fairly widely distributed, with every state in the U.S. having at least some Vietnamese. The adaptation of members of this ethnic group, then, has become a truly national issue for Americans. Louisiana, with about 3% of all Vietnamese in the United States, still had one of the larger Vietnamese populations outside of California and Texas, and Louisiana's Vietnamese population had increased by 62% in this ten-year period, although the state's share of the group had declined from 4% as result of even greater population growth elsewhere.

Despite this wide distribution at the level of the state, as I will point in the next section, scholars who have studied Vietnamese Americans have noted a definite tendency to cluster into ethnic communities within states. This means that not only have Vietnamese Americans become a notable segment of the American population everywhere, but Vietnamese communities have become an increasingly salient aspect of American life in a wide variety of places.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Vietnamese American Families

Table 1.2 contrasts the characteristics of Vietnamese American families with those of American whites and blacks. The overwhelming majority of Vietnamese family households are two-parent households, but the percentage of two-parent households is still somewhat less than the percentage of two-family households of white Americans. The Vietnamese also show a slightly higher percentage of female-headed households than do white Americans, although the proportion of female-headed family households is far less than that of black Americans. This might lead one to believe that Vietnamese family situations are, in terms of presence of parents, roughly similar to those of other Americans. However, when we look at the percentage of Vietnamese adults who were divorced, which is far less than that of white or black Americans, it becomes apparent that the splitting up of parents in this ethnic group, to the extent that it existed, was a result of their status as refugees, rather than a product of divorce.

Table 1.2. Family Characteristics of U.S. Vietnamese, Whites, and Blacks in 1990.

	Vietnamese	White	Black
% 2 Parent Households	70.57	81.21	47.39
% Female-Headed	16.24	14.32	45.04
% Divorced[a]	5.30	11.17	16.98
Average no. in family	4.36	3.06	3.48
% Families with 3 or more workers	21.3	12.8	13.2
% Extended family households[b]	21.9	3.8	9.9
Median HH income	$29,772	$31,435	$19,758
Median family income	$30,550	$37,152	$22,429
% Families on public assistance	24.5	5.5	21.0
% Households below poverty level	23.8	7.0	26.3
% Households linguistically isolated	46.9	2.5	1.4

[a] Defined as all those over the age of 15 who have been married and are now classified as "divorced".

[b] Defined as households with related members 15 years of age or over other than spouse, children, parents, or parents-in-law of the householder

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

Vietnamese families, with an average of 4.36 persons per family, were larger than the families of either of the major American racial groups, and they were much more likely to contain three or more workers. While extended family households were somewhat more common among black Americans (9.9%) than among white Americans (3.8%), over one out of every five Vietnamese American households was an extended family household.

Vietnamese families and households enjoyed higher median incomes than black families and households, and their median household incomes were nearly as high as those of white Americans. This may, at least in part, be explained by the large number of Vietnamese families with multiple workers. Over 21% of Vietnamese families have 3 or more workers per family, compared to 12.8% of white American families and 13.2% of black American families.

In spite of the relatively high household and family incomes that apparently result from multiple-worker households, Vietnamese Americans tend to be an economically disadvantaged segment of the population. About one in every four Vietnamese households receives public assistance and approximately an equal proportion lives below poverty-level. These poverty characteristics are similar to those of black Americans and they stand in stark contrast to the low rates of poverty among white Americans, supporting the observation that the United States remains economically stratified along racial lines. As a minority group, the Vietnamese are especially handicapped by unfamiliarity with the English language, since they not only show the economic characteristics of native minority members, but nearly half of them live in linguistically isolated households.

The Growth of Vietnamese American Communities and Scholarly Attention to the Phenomenon

Haines (1985) has pointed out that "refugee adjustment is as much a function of social groups as it is of individuals," and that both Cuban and Vietnamese communities have been crucial in the economic and psychological adjustment of their members to life in the United States

(pp. 45-48). Since the early 1980s, a number of scholars have called attention to the fact that Vietnamese Americans have not simply grown in numbers and increased in geographical concentrations, they have also formed definable communities. In 1981, Peter I. Rose remarked of his qualitative research among resettled Vietnamese refugees that "it became quite clear to us that community was indeed an important social arena for Vietnamese refugees." "One woman," he observed, "reacted with some alarm to a question about ways in which refugees help each other within the family context. 'Not just the family,' she said, 'but the whole Vietnamese community." Rose cited Dr. Tran Minh Tung, a Vietnamese American authority on refugee adaptation, as having observed that "the community is the major, or most desired, source of practical and emotional support for the refugees. (Rose, 1981: 314-315)

Christine R. Finnan and Rhonda Ann Cooperstein, in 1983, produced a report for the Office of Refugee Resettlement that has become influential among resettlement officials who work with the Vietnamese. This report was based on a study of five Southeast Asian communities, one of which was the Vietnamese community of New Orleans. In place of the "first wave" and "second wave" division of Southeast Asian refugees, Finnan and Cooperstein suggest that three phases can be identified in the resettlement process.

The first phase occurred from 1975 to 1978, when about 150,000 Indochinese arrived in the U.S. "These refugees," the authors note, "tended to be well-educated and many spoke English at the time of their arrival. Refugees were initially placed in localities scattered across the United States. There were very few Southeast Asians living in the United States prior to 1975, so refugees had to form new communities rather than rely on existing communities for support. Refugees formed small communities; formal organizations began to develop, and leaders emerged. Members of these communities primarily provided intangible support to each other. Secondary migration to areas of refugee

concentration began to occur during the end of this phase" (Finnan and Cooperstein, 1983: 16).

The second phase identified by Finnan and Cooperstein lasted from 1979 to 1982, when about 400,000 Southeast Asians from all socioeconomic backgrounds flooded into the U.S. These newcomers were drawn to the ethnic concentrations that had already been established. As Vietnamese communities put down deeper roots and grew in size, ethnic businesses began to be established and community structures, such as formal organizations and patterns of leadership, took definite form (Finnan and Cooperstein, 1983: 17).

In the third phase, the flood of refugees became a trickle and the newcomers arrived in well-established communities. "Refugee leaders and self-help organizations have become integral parts of the resettlement program on many localities. During this phase, the refugee communities have continued to provide intangible support to their members, and are becoming increasingly capable of providing tangible support" (Finnan and Cooperstein, 1983: 18).

Finnan and Cooperstein argue that the development of Southeast Asian communities in the United States has major policy implications for government programs directed toward the Vietnamese and the much smaller groups from Laos and Cambodia. First, they argue that the U.S. government must shift its focus from a concern with the short-term economic adjustment of individual Southeast Asians to a focus on long-term adaptation of those in specific localities. Second, they maintain that the individual orientation must change to a community orientation. Such an orientation would involve "... recognizing refugee communities as viable ethnic communities similar to nonrefugee ethnic communities in the locality" (Finnan and Cooperstein, 1983: 19).

The growth of Vietnamese communities does not appear to have stimulated such a shift in public policy, but they have drawn attention. While government policies toward Southeast Asians continue to focus

primarily on placing individuals in jobs, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian communities have become increasingly notable as social entities, and this has led to other community studies. Paul Rutledge's *The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self-Identity: A Vietnamese Community* (1985) not only recognizes that Vietnamese Americans have settled into distinguishable and cohesive social units, it also provides insight into how religion may serve as an integrative and organizing principle in these social units. Rutledge finds that, once a Vietnamese community was established in Oklahoma City, the community of his focus, others tended to be drawn by personal ties, particularly family ties (Rutledge, 1985: 11-12). Having a Vietnamese community as a support system, in which religious beliefs and organizations play a major role, tends to lessen the importance of assimilation. "The primary strategy of the Oklahoma City Vietnamese in the employment of religion as an aspect of social identity," Rutledge writes, "is not assimilation, but adaptation; adaptation in such a way as to positively increase their present position while maintaining their ethnic identity" (Rutledge, 1985: 74).

In The *Vietnamese Experience in America* (1992), Rutledge expands his investigation through interviews with Vietnamese in virtually all parts of the United States, finding consistency between characteristics of the Vietnamese community in Oklahoma City and those elsewhere in the country. "One of the foremost strengths affecting Vietnamese refugee adaptation and adjustment to the United States," he observes on the basis of these interviews, "has been the formation of communities. Vietnamese communities are proving to be strong pillars for assisting refugees in their adjustment economically, spiritually, psychologically, and symbolically. Their communities are supportive through continuing many of the traditional practices of Vietnam, while simultaneously encouraging changes necessary to adapt successfully" (Rutledge, 1992: 58).

The Vietnamese community in Oklahoma City has also attracted the attention of anthropologist Charles C. Muzny. Muzny finds that on the

individual level Vietnamese made some adaptive changes to life in America, but that individual lives continued to be dominated by the family (Muzny, 1989: 184-5). For the purposes of the present study, however, the most interesting developments in the Vietnamese community of Oklahoma City occurred at the group level. "On the group level," Muzny reports, "it was observed that a small nucleus of elites assumed leadership positions among the Vietnamese of Oklahoma City. The same group of leaders were mainly responsible for the development of the Vietnamese American Association (VAA), the Vietnamese Buddhist Association, the Vietnamese Catholic Association, and the Vietnamese Baptist Association. Through the programs of the VAA, other Vietnamese were able to study English, find jobs, and make advances in public sector areas of work and school" (Muzny, 1989: 186). Thus, to Rutledge's observations of the importance of collective life and the centrality of religious institutions to Vietnamese adaptation, Muzny adds the insight of a particular structure of social relations within this collective life, a structure dominated by an elite exercising its influence through multiple, interlocking formal ethnic associations.

The emergence of a distinctive, residentially concentrated community in New Orleans has also drawn scholarly attention. Jesse Nash, in his doctoral dissertation (1987) and in a book based on that dissertation (1992), analyzes the system of values of this Vietnamese American community. He gives particular attention to the tightly-knit, interconnecting system of relations that gives rise to and is expressed by this value system. Nash finds that children in the Vietnamese neighborhood find themselves in a dense web of relationships consisting of all of their neighbors as well as their individual family members. To illustrate this point, Nash quotes the Vietnamese proverb, "Parents may be far away, but the neighbors are always near" (Nash, 1992: 53).

The sociologist Nazli Kibria (1993) has interviewed members of Vietnamese households around the United States. Based on these

interviews, she argues against the argument, popular among neo-conservatives, that Vietnamese Americans constitute a success story resulting from the maintenance of strong, traditional families. Instead, she concludes, Vietnamese families have actually gone through a great deal of strain and change in the process of putting down roots in a new world. While family ties remain an important part of the Vietnamese adaptational response, they have reconstructed systems of family ties in the United States "... by shifting and expanding the criteria for inclusion in the family circle. Thus, for example, friends and distant relatives who had been marginal members of the family circle in Vietnam became part of the active circle of kin relations in the United States" (Kibria, 1993: 8). These greatly extended family networks serve as bases for Vietnamese communities, both because they tend to concentrate kin-groups in particular areas and because they provide pre-existing relations that may be relied upon for support in an alien environment.

Chapter Summary

Vietnamese Americans constitute a new American minority group, brought into existence after 1975 as a result of American military involvement in Southeast Asia. Members of this group are now found in most states, but are especially concentrated in California and Texas. Louisiana has one of the larger Vietnamese populations outside of these two states. Vietnamese Americans tend to be socioeconomically disadvantaged, compared to the majority white population. A number of scholars have noted that Vietnamese Americans have formed distinctive communities, and that they rely on social relations in these communities for support in adapting to life in the United States.

Chapter 2. A Lotus on the Bayou: The Growth and Structure of a Vietnamese Community

The Founding of a Vietnamese Community in New Orleans

The Vietnamese community of New Orleans East began in 1975, after the fall of Saigon, when about 1,000 refugees from Vietnam were settled on the eastern edge of New Orleans by Associated Catholic Charities, one of the volunteer agencies in charge of refugee resettlement, with offices in New Orleans (Ashton, 1985a: a13). "These neighborhoods were seeded by chance," writes a *Times Picayune* reporter. "Their location reflects the city's rental vacancies a decade ago when Associated Catholic Charities began looking for housing for the refugees" (Ashton, 1985a: a1). The Versailles Arms apartments, near Michoud Boulevard and the Chef Menteur Highway, offered ample room for new residents. The apartments were considered undesirable by most New Orleanians, since they were a long way from the city itself and were provided with inadequate bus service (Ashton, 1985b: a12). According to the Melanie Ottaway, manager of Versailles Arms Apartments, the apartment complex had been built in 1970, when the neighborhood of New Orleans East was still expected to expand, along with the local NASA plant (Ottaway, personal communication, 2/17/94). By 1975, however, economic hardship had hit the plant and the management of Versailles Arms was eager to find residents.

These initial 1,000 residents provided the end link in a system of chain migration. In 1976, another 2,000 Vietnamese arrived on their own. While Associated Catholic Charities has continued to settle Vietnamese in this area, many of the residents have been drawn by ties to friends, relatives, and former neighbors. According to Sister Ann Devaney, head of refugee social services for Catholic Charities, three fifths of those who have settled in the community have been secondary migrants from other states.

The religious and historical backgrounds of those in this neighborhood attest to the importance of established networks in directing living patterns, even among those who have migrated around the

world. Eighty percent of the Vietnamese in this community are Catholics. The late Rev. Michael Viet-Anh, a priest who lived in the Versailles area, has estimated that "about 60 percent of the Vietnamese in the Versailles community once lived in Bui Chu province in North Vietnam and later moved to Vung Tau (a coastal town in former South Vietnam)" (Ashton, 1985a: a12). Phuc Tinh, another fishing village in South Vietnam was also settled in 1954 by North Vietnamese from Bui Chu, so that there are a variety of kinship ties between the people of Phuc Tinh and those of Vung Tau.

Most of the residents of this neighborhood who do not trace their origins back to Bui Chu are from families deriving from Nghe An, another Catholic area that moved south in 1954. The Nghe An people settled on the island of Phu Quoc or in the coastal town of Nha Trang. This reconstruction of Vietnamese villages on the banks of the bayous has resulted from channeling by ethnic networks, rather than from official resettlement policy. "Despite the appearances," the *Times Picayune* concludes from an interview with former Associated Catholic Charities head Michael Haddad, "no villages were resettled ... in New Orleans by Associated Catholic Charities. The villagers apparently regrouped on their own" (Ashton, 1985a: a12).

In a manner reminiscent of the Mexican kinship networks in Massey et al.'s *Return to Aztlan* (1987) , family networks provided the means for conveying to Vietnamese in other states that a large concentration existed in New Orleans East. By the time of the second wave of Vietnamese refugees, the Vietnamese settled in the United States had themselves become sponsors for newly arrived refugees, replacing the organizational sponsorship of the first years. Since they generally sponsored their relatives, this means that Vietnamese increasingly came directly to New Orleans from Vietnam.

At present, as the overseas refugee camps are being closed down, almost all primary migrants are coming directly from Vietnam, into the

homes of their kinspeople (Tony Tran, personal communication, 4/13/94). All of my interviewees reported that they had been drawn to New Orleans by of some sort of family connection. When I asked, "why did you come to New Orleans?," the most common answers were "because my brother was here" or "because my uncle was here", or because some other relative was already in the New Orleans area. Other answers that were frequently given were, "because I heard the weather was like the weather in Vietnam," or "because I heard there were jobs for fishermen." These answers might, on the face of it, seem to suggest that at least some of the residents of New Orleans East had not migrated along lines provided by family networks. However, when I would ask them, "how did you hear about the weather?" or "how did you hear about the job?" the answers were, invariably, "my wife's uncle, who was already here, told us about it in a letter," or "I heard about it from my cousin." Thus, even those who did not have family reunification as a motivation for moving to New Orleans moved as a result of information provided by family communication channels.

According to a 1979 report of the Indochinese Resettlement Task Force, appointed by the Mayor of New Orleans to study the impact of the Vietnamese on the city, New Orleans is attractive to the Vietnamese because of a strong Catholic organization funded for resettlement and social services, a Catholic cultural ambience, proximity to fishing opportunities, and climactic similarities with their homeland (Indochinese Resettlement Task Force, 1979: 10-11). However, since Louisiana's services and opportunities are limited compared to many other parts of the country, the Vietnamese community itself appears to be the biggest draw for secondary migrants. "Refugee communities have built up in areas based on four factors - a good economy, an existing Vietnamese community, higher welfare benefits, and warm weather," remarks Rhonda Cooperstein, co-author of a federal report on refugee communities in New Orleans, Orange and San Francisco counties in California, Wichita, Kan.,

and Rochester and Ithaca, New York, has remarked. "Since New Orleans doesn't have particularly high welfare benefits and its economy has been in a slump, if people are moving to Louisiana I'd say they are going for the community" (Ashton. 1985a: 12a).

Since most of the Vietnamese of New Orleans East come from villages, they are generally of modest socioeconomic backgrounds. The 1979 Task Force described them as "agriculturalists and fishermen" in their native country (Indochinese Resettlement Task Force, 1979: 10-11). The 1990 5% Public Use Microdata Sample of the U.S. Census of Population and Housing indicates that Vietnamese in the New Orleans SMSA continue to work in relatively low-paying, blue-collar occupations. Although the Vietnamese of this area are not concentrated in any one occupational area, the general tenor of their employment is suggested by the few jobs in which more than 3% of them are employed: cashiers (4.0%), waiters and waitresses (3.1%), cooks (3.1%), fishers (3.1%), and textile sewing machine operators (4.8%).

The limited educational background of people in the Vietnamese residential concentration in New Orleans East is reflected in a survey of Vietnamese students at Sarah Towles Reed High School, which is located in this community, in May, 1992 by Min Zhou, a sociologist from Louisiana State University. 39.0% of the students who reported their fathers' highest level of education reported that their fathers had not completed high school. 79.3% of those who were able to report their fathers' highest level of education reported that their fathers had completed no higher level than high school. 52.8% of the students who were able to give the educational level of their mothers reported that their mothers had less than a high school education. 87.5% of those able to give mothers' educational level reported that their mothers' educational levels were high school or less. Even these figures, however, may inflate the educational background of parents in this community, since 37.7% of all respondents were unable to report fathers' highest educational level

and 40.1% of all respondents were unable to report mothers' highest educational level because they said they did not know what level of education had been completed by their parents.

Social Geography of the Community

The Vietnamese residential enclave in New Orleans is bounded by the Chef Menteur Highway, Michoud Boulevard, and the Bayou Sauvage Wildlife Refuge, near the Michoud exit from the I-10 expressway, about 10 miles from the bridge over Lake Ponchartrain to Slidell (cf. Bankston, 1991: 14). Conveniently, the neighborhood is located within a single census tract, Tract 17.29, although in recent years it has begun to extend into another, newer and wealthier, tract, Tract 17.30. Table 2.1 can give some idea of the demographic characteristics of this community, and how these characteristics have changed over a relatively short period of time.

In 1970, the two areas that now comprise Tract 17.29 and Tract 17.30 were a single tract, Tract 17.12. The population was small and almost all the inhabits were white. Nearly a quarter of them were college graduates, and only 4.5% were below the poverty level. During the 1970's, the area began a major demographic change.

The historical sources of this change are complex, but at the risk of oversimplification, we may identify the chief causes as: (1) a decline in employment at the Michoud NASA plant, which was the most important industry in the area; (2) an influx of black families seeking a suburban way of life, which caused those whites who were unwilling to be part of a numerical racial minority to move to Slidell, Mandeville, and other places immediately outside of New Orleans; and (3) the failure of the plans of contractors and developers for the area. In the newspaper article, "Plans for the Model Community Didn't Include Crime, Poverty", *Times-Picayune* staff writer Christopher Cooper described the difficulties that have beset these suburbs, named "Village de l'Est" by developers. "Designed in the early 1960s, Village de l'Est was a forerunner of a national suburban trend called the 'New City' ... The dream began to sour

Table 2.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Vietnamese Residential Enclave of New Orleans East.

	1970		1980
Census tracts	17.12[a]	17.29	17.30
Total population	4945	10566	89
White	4877	3224	58
Black	22	3680	31
Vietnamese	0	3352	0
Other Asian	0	74	0
All families	1310	2334	22
Female headed	80	427	1
% Males in labor force	88.8	65.2	19.8
% Unemployed	6.7	5.7	35.3
% Females in labor force	45.1	53.5	20.7
% Unemployed	5.7	7.4	100.0[b]
Median family income ($)	11927	16560	9605
% Families below poverty	4.5	24.9	0
% High School Graduate	78.0	63.5	31.2
% College Graduate	23.0	12.5	0

(Table con'd)

	1990		
Census tracts	17.29	17.30	Vietnamese Only
Total population	10607	1496	4566
White	1059	443	---
Black	4854	960	---
Vietnamese	4566	74	4566
Other Asian	89	5	---
All families	2411	368	898
Female headed	614	67	52
% Males in labor force	62.5	88.8	55.5
% Unemployed	12.8	6.3	16.2
% Females in labor force	47.2	80.3	34.9
% Unemployed	11.4	5.3	8.7
Median family income ($)	17044	38864	15841
% Families below poverty level	37.1	4.9	50.4
% High School Graduate	60.0	93.8	36.5
% College Graduate	14.4	38.3	4.0

[a] The areas of Tracts 17.29 and 17.30 together comprised Tract 17.12 in 1970.

[b] Only 6 females were listed as being in the labor force in Tract 17.30 in 1980, all unemployed.

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 3C

a few years later when the NASA plant lost several contracts and started laying off workers. Then developers who needed to drain the vast marshlands of New Orleans East to complete their plans ran into fierce opposition from environmentalists. By the 1980s, their "New City" had fallen apart" (Cooper, 1991: 1,4). Because the new suburbs were built on soft swamp land, moreover, subsidence became a serious problem, as houses, garages, and sidewalks began to sink unevenly, causing cracks in floors and sidewalks, and often making it impossible to open garage doors (Cooper, 1991: 4)

As the dreams of suburban planners began to fade and the economic base of the community weakened, the nature of construction in the area changed. By the early 1980s, housing construction shifted from single family homes to rental units, bringing in a more transient and poorer population. This induced many of the older homeowners to abandon the neighborhood in favor of suburbs across Lake Ponchartrain (Cooper, 1991: 4).

The problem of "white flight" to the parishes around New Orleans would, in itself, be an interesting and challenging subject for a dissertation. As the black population of New Orleans grew as a proportion of all residents, blacks seeking a suburban way of life moved to this new neighborhood in large numbers. "Between 1970 and 1980, about 30,000 people moved to eastern New Orleans, swelling the population by 73 percent, while the city as a whole lost population. Most of those who moved to eastern New Orleans ... were black" (Rosenzweig, 1983: 1). In the absence of a survey on this subject, it is difficult to say how many whites left the area because of reluctance to live in a majority black neighborhood, but this seems to have been one of the factors in this change.

One pocket of this area formed an exception to the general trends in New Orleans East. Between 1980 and 1990, a number of fairly expensive condominiums and apartment complexes were built in Tract 17.30, in the

area known as "Oak Island", located along Michoud Boulevard near the interstate highway, which provided convenient access to both New Orleans and Slidell. This transformed Tract 17.30, which had been mostly swamp, into an island of affluence, bordering Tract 17.29, where housing constructed during the heyday of the New Orleans aerospace industry was vacant and available to lower-income people.

By 1980, as we have seen, the Vietnamese community had been established as a result of the cheap, available housing in this area. By this time, the area was almost 1/3 white, 1/3 black, and 1/3 Vietnamese. Although the percentage of males in the labor force who were unemployed had declined slightly since 1970, the percentage of familes below the poverty level had risen drastically to nearly a quarter of the population. This may be attributed in part to the increase in female-headed families, which rose from only about 6% of all families to over 18%.

By 1990, the neighborhood had become almost entirely black and Vietnamese: 45.76% of the total population was black and 43.05% were Vietnamese. To interpret these statistics correctly, it is important to emphasize that they do not mean that blacks and Vietnamese are evenly distributed on every street. While the two racial groups live in close proximity throughout this census tract, the Vietnamese are heavily concentrated along Versailles Avenue and its adjoining streets, and around the Vietnamese Catholic church on Dwyer Boulevard. Many of the newer streets in the vicinity of the church bear Vietnamese names. The Vietnamese have tended to move out of the Versailles Arms apartments, initial focal point of their settlement, and into the nearby suburban, free-standing housing.

Many of the people in this area are struggling economically: the median family income of census tract 17.29 was only $17,440 in 1990, and 37.1% of families were below the poverty level. For the city of New Orleans, at the same time, the median household income was $18,477 and

27.3% of families were below poverty level. In the State of Louisiana as a whole, the median household income was $21,949 and only 19.4% of families were below the poverty level. The Vietnamese in this neighborhood had a median family income of only $15,841 and over half of the Vietnamese families in the tract lived below the poverty level.

Unemployment among males in the labor force was 12.8% and 25.47% of all families were headed by females. The Vietnamese showed even higher unemployment than their neighbors of other racial groups, with a male unemployment rate of 16.23%. However, they were much less likely to live in female-headed households: only 5.8% of Vietnamese families in the tract were headed by females.

In terms of education, the Vietnamese appear to be at a considerable disadvantage compared to their non-Vietnamese neighbors. Table 2.1 shows that 60.0% of the residents of Tract 17.29 were high school graduates. However, only 36.5% of adult Vietnamese in the area were high school graduates in 1990, and only 4.0% were college graduates.

In sum, this is a relatively poor neighborhood, and the Vietnamese occupy an even more serious economic situation than their non-Vietnamese neighbors, with several decided disadvantages in human capital endowments. If the Vietnamese of New Orleans East are able to contribute to the future of their young people, it is clearly not through possession of superior financial or human capital. However, they may enjoy some forms of social capital, such as intact families, to a greater extent than those around them. Table 2.2 offers a comparison of the three racial groups in this tract.

The category "Asian" in this table is almost identical with "Vietnamese," since the Vietnamese make up over 98 percent of the Asian population. Here, we see that the overwhelming majority of Asian families in the tract (81.8%) are married couple families, and most of the single parent families are headed by males. By contrast, just over half of the black families are married couple families, and over 40% are

Table 2.2. Comparision of the Three Racial Groups in Tract 17.29.

Family Characteristics	White	Black	Asian
Married couple families (%)	216 (75.5)	654 (53.3)	729 (81.2)
Male headed families (%)	21 (7.3)	60 (4.9)	117 (13.0)
Female headed families (%)	49 (17.1)	513 (41.8)	53 (5.8)
Family households	286	1227	898
Non-family households	83	213	106
School Enrollment[a]			
Elementary or high school (%)	122 (12.0)	1350 (29.6)	1554 (35.0)
College (%)	48 (4.7)	305 (6.7)	317 (7.2)
Educational Attainment[b]			
% Less than H.S.	201 (25.7)	551 (23.8)	1308 (63.5)
% H.S. grad	197 (25.2)	426 (18.4)	395 (19.2)
% Some college	139 (17.8)	732 (31.7)	146 (7.1)
% Associate degree	32 (4.1)	157 (6.8)	128 (6.2)
% Bachelor's degree	91 (11.6)	312 (13.5)	36 (1.8)
% Graduate degree	122 (15.6)	133 (5.8)	47 (2.3)

(Table con'd)

Employment Status[c]	White	Black	Asian
Male			
Employed civilian (%)	224 (87.5)	859 (89.8)	640 (83.8)
Unemployed civilian (%)	32 (12.5)	98 (10.2)	124 (16.2)
Female			
Employed civilian (%)	164 (100.0)	884 (85.6)	429 (91.3)
Unemployed civilian (%)	0 (0.0)	149 (14.4)	41 (8.7)
% in labor force			
Male	56.1	71.4	55.5
Female	36.9	59.4	34.9
HH Incomes			
< $5000 (%)	62 (16.8)	263 (18.3)	179 (17.8)
$5000=$9999 (%)	25 (6.8)	140 (9.7)	161 (16.0)
$10000-$14999 (%)	45 (12.2)	214 (14.9)	154 (15.3)
$15000-$24999 (%)	39 (10.6)	290 (20.1)	262 (26.1)
$25000-$34999 (%)	61 (16.5)	115 (8.0)	113 (11.3)
$35000-$49999 (%)	29 (17.9)	225 (15.6)	75 (7.5)
$50000-$74999 (%)	108 (29.3)	167 (11.6)	60 (6.0)
$75000-$99999 (%)	0 (0.0)	10 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
$100000+ (%)	0 (0.0)	16 (1.1)	0 (0.0)

[a] All persons over 3 years of age included.
[b] All persons over 25 years of age included
[c] Persons in the labor force over 16 included
[d] All persons over 16 included
Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

female-headed. Over 75% of the white families are married couple families, but, as the figures on school enrollment suggest, the whites in this area tend to be older, with only about 12% of the white population enrolled in elementary or secondary school, compared to almost 30% for the black population and over 35% for the Asian population. Indeed, 450 of the 1,059 whites in this census tract, or over 42%, are listed as over 50 years of age.

The more detailed breakdown of education by race offered in this table provides more insight into the severe human capital limitations of the Asians in this neighborhood. A clear majority, almost 64%, have not completed high school. 82.7% have a high school education or less. By contrast, a little over a quarter of the whites and a little under a quarter of the blacks had not finished high school.

The tract-level statistics on distribution of household income tell us that, although this is a poor area, it is not the uniform poverty one might expect in some inner-city neighborhoods. This is true for all three racial groups. For blacks and Vietnamese, the modal income categories were in the $15,000 to $24,999 range. For whites, the modal category was in the $50,000 to $74,999. Personal observation in the neighborhood supports the speculation that there are so many relatively high income whites because the whites are older people residence in the area dates back to the period before its decline.

Looking at the figures on labor force participation, we see that not only did area Asians in the labor force have the high rates of unemployment we have noted above, but they also had low rates of labor force participation. Only 55.48% of Asian males and 34.92% of Asian females were in the labor force. These figures are comparable to those of the white population, but, as noted, the whites tended to be an older group, many of whom were retirees. Among the Asians, however, Census statistics tell us that 91.59% were under age 60. Inability to speak English well may be one of the factors accounting for this low labor

Table 2.3. Language Spoken in Household and Linguistic Isolation in Tract 17.29.

English-speaking HHs	1701
Spanish-speaking HHs	102
Linguistically isolated	14
Not isolated	88
Asian language-speaking HHs	964
Linguistically isolated	390
Not isolated	574
HHs speaking other languages	46
Linguistically isolated	11
Not isolated	35

Note: Only White, Black, and Asian households are reported in this tract. It may be concluded that 40 of the 1.004 Asian households (3.98%) speak English at home. Over 96% speak an Asian language at home. 390 of these Asian families, or 38.84%, are linguistically isolated. Since the Vietnamese constitute 98.09% of the Asians in this tract, statistics about Asians may be considered to represent the characteristics of the Vietnamese.

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

force participation. Table 2.3 gives data on language spoken at home and linguistic isolation for Tract 17.29. Of the 1004 Asian households in this tract, 964 speak an Asian language at home. It may be concluded that 40 of the Asian households (3.98%) speak English at home. Over 96% speak an Asian language at home. 390 of these Asian families, or 38.84%, are linguistically isolated.

Table 2.4 offers information on recency of arrival, a human capital variable that is closely related to English-speaking ability. While there are some other non-Asian immigrants in the area, since the overwhelming majority of immigrants are Vietnamese, we may take this table as a reasonably accurate indicator of when the local Vietnamese arrived. 3250 of the foreign born persons in this tract had arrived since 1975, the year the Indochinese began settling in the United States. These may virtually all be assumed to be Indochinese, and one can safely assume that the remainder of the 4655 Asians in the neighborhood are those born in the U.S. since 1975.

1,296 individuals, or approximately 27.8% of the entire Asian population, are immigrants who arrived in the United States after 1980. 1,954, or approximately 42% of the entire population are "first wave" immigrants. Since virtually all adult Indochinese are immigrants, this indicates that about 40% of the adults here are "second wave" immigrants and about 60% are "first wave" immigrants, assuming that adults make up approximately the same proportion of individuals arriving in both waves. Nearly 12% of the immigrants, and a little over 8% of the entire Asian population, had arrived between 1987 and 1990. While there were a fairly large number of Asian individuals who had been in the U.S. at least ten years, in other words, new comers made up a sizeable proportion of the population.

The Vietnamese were not simply living in a single census tract; they were also highly concentrated in two block groups. Table 2.5 shows data on the three block groups in Tract 17.29. Block group 3, the block

Table 2.4 Year of Entry of Foreign-Born Persons in Tract 17.29.

1987 to 1990	388
(%)	(11.3)
1985 or 1986	107
(%)	(3.1)
1982 to 1984	472
(%)	(13.7)
1980 or 1981	329
(%)	(9.6)
1975 to 1979	1954
(%)	(56.9)
1970 to 1974	122
(%)	(3.6)
1965 to 1969	0
(%)	(0.0)
1960 to 1964	0
(%)	(0.0)
1950 to 1959	21
(%)	(0.6)
Before 1950	43
(%)	(1.3)

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

Table 2.5. Comparison of Block Groups 1, 2, and 3 in Tract 17.29.

	BG 1	BG 2	BG 3
Vietnamese	1247	165	3154
Whites	160	450	449
Blacks	1271	894	2689
Vietnamese as % of BG	45.6	10.9	50.1
% of tract Vietnamese in BG	27.3	3.6	69.1
Median HH income	$22868	$37083	$12790
% in labor force			
Male	68.6	59.1	60.2
Female	61.8	50.8	40.2
% Unemployed			
Male	13.6	11.9	12.7
Female	9.0	11.4	12.9
% H.S. Graduates			
White	61.2	85.3	67.3
Black	87.3	65.7	74.6
Asian	58.8	39.0	28.5
% College grads			
White	25.6	39.5	13.9
Black	20.1	26.0	15.6
Asian	6.4	0.0	3.6
% Asian HHs linguistically isolated	18.3	27.0	48.2
% Families with public assistance	9.5	6.8	23.3
% Families below poverty	31.9	12.2	48.9
Persons per HH			
Whites	3.3	3.5	3.6
Blacks	3.5	3.8	3.3
Asians	5.2	4.5	4.5
% Married couple family			
White	66.7	84.3	69.1
Black	66.5	72.3	41.9
Asian	83.3	100.0	79.2
% Female householder			
White	33.3	7.9	18.3
Black	24.1	22.5	55.3
Asian	4.2	0.0	6.8

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing

group that includes the Versailles Arms Apartments and the dense Vietnamese settlement in free-standing housing to the south of Dwyer Road between Alcee Fortier and Palace Street, contains over 69% of the Vietnamese in this tract, and over 50% of those living in this block group are Vietnamese. The Vietnamese in Block Group 1 are concentrated in the area immediately around Mary Queen of Vietnam Church. The houses in this area were built in 1980 by a Vietnamese developer, Mr. Hung Van Chu, who gave Vietnamese names to many of the streets. The comparatively high household income of Block Group 1 is primarily attributable to a few blocks of upscale housing in the section west of Bayou Michoud, particularly in the northwest portion of Block Group 1, where only a few Vietnamese have settled.

Because the surrounding neighborhood, in this small section of Block Group 2 and in Block Group 3, had become such a concentration of Vietnamese by the early 1980s, in Sept., 1983 the Archdiocese gave permission for the current large Vietnamese church to be built. Funds were collected from Vietnamese Catholics throughout New Orleans and the church was completed in May, 1985, marking the ethnic identification of the few blocks around it.

Block group 3 is the poorest of these block groups, with a median household income of only $12,790 in 1989. The Asians showed lower levels of education than members of other racial groups in all three block groups, but this is especially noticeable in this area of heavy concentration, where only 28.5% of Asians had graduated from high school and only 3.55% had graduated from college (while there were no Asian college graduates in block group 2, this is largely because there were very few Asians living there).

Nearly half the Asian households in this central area were linguistically isolated, while only 18.3% of households in block group 1 and only 27.03% of households in block group 2 were linguistically isolated. Block group 3, where most of the Vietnamese community lives,

also had the greatest number of households receiving public assistance and the greatest percentage of households (nearly half) living below the poverty level. It should be noted that the average number of individuals per Asian household here is probably artificially depressed by the policies of Versailles Arms Apartments. Since the management of the Apartment Complex forbids more than one nuclear family to occupy an apartment, the housing density is somewhat below that of the surrounding Vietnamese (Melanie Ottaway, personal communication, 2/27/94).

The variation in family structure among the racial groups in the three areas is interesting. In the modest economic setting of block group 1, about two-thirds of both white and black families were married couple families. Black families, in this working class area, showed lower rates of female-headed households than did white families. However, over four-fifths of the substantial number of Vietnamese in block group 1 (27.3% of all Vietnamese in the tract) lived in married couple families. In the relatively well-to-do area of block group 2, both of the principal American racial groups showed high percentages of married couple families, although black families did show higher rates of female headed households. *All* of the comparatively few Vietnamese who lived in this block group, however, were in married couple families.

It is in block group 3 that differences among the three ethnic groups become most marked. 79.2% of Asian families and 69.1% of the small number of white families in this poor area were in married couple families. Fewer than half of the black families in this block group (41.9%) were in married couple families.

Most of the Asians in single-parent families here were in male-headed households. Only 6.76% of Asian families here were in female-headed households. Observation, personal experience, and interviews indicate that most of the single-parent Asian families have resulted from the difficult process of fleeing Vietnam, a process in which family members sometimes perish and are often left behind, rather than divorce

or from the initial lack of a two-parent family. The relatively high number of female-headed black families in this block group suggests significant infrastructural differences between African-Americans and Vietnamese (the two major groups here).

Caution should be exercised in interpreting the causal factors behind these infrastructural differences. The relationship of female-headed households to poverty among native-born Americans is a hotly debated question, and it is difficult to say to what extent the historical experience of poverty and disadvantaged status has caused the high rate of female single-parent families among the minority poor and to what extent infrastructural problems in the family perpetuate economic disadvantage. However, since we are focusing on the Vietnamese in this study, it should suffice to point out that the Vietnamese in this poor neighborhood enjoy a much higher percentage of intact families.

Geographical Structure

The map included as Figure 2 may help to make this discussion more concrete. We can identify three focal points in this community: the area of the Versailles Arms Apartments, which was the initial point of settlement and remains the center of many activities; the business district of Alcee Fortier Boulevard; and the grounds of Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, located at the corner of Dwyer Boulevard and Willowbrook Drive.

The Versailles Arms Apartment complex is no longer the first residence of most newly arriving Vietnamese. Because so many of them are now drawn to the New Orleans area by extended family ties, it has become more common, since roughly the mid-1980s, for new arrivals to stay initially with relatives in the surrounding neighborhood or to be settled in their own homes by their relatives. Also, since these apartments became federally subsidized housing, in the late 1970s, there has been increasing demand for places in these apartments by non-Vietnamese. Nevertheless, just over 50% of these apartments are occupied by people

Figure 2: Map of the Vietnamese Community of New Orleans East.

A. Versailles Arms Apartments. Site of the initial settlement of Vietnamese refugees in New Orleans East.

B. Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, Child Development Center, and affiliated buildings.

C. Commercial strip. Location of primary ethnic business district.

D. Vegetable gardens. The area along the northern border is the first and chief setting for the gardens. The area at the end of Peltier is a more recent place for cultivation that has been planted within the last five years.

E. Sarah Towles Reed High School.

F. Etienne Bore Elementary School.

G. Housing development created in the early 1980s by a Vietnamese entrepreneur. It will be noted that several of the streets (TuDo, My-Viet, Vanchu) bear Vietnamse names.

H. Heaviest concentration of Vietnamese Americans in free-standing housing, in the square bordered on the north by Dwyer, on the south by Peltier, on the west by Palace, and on the east by Alsace.

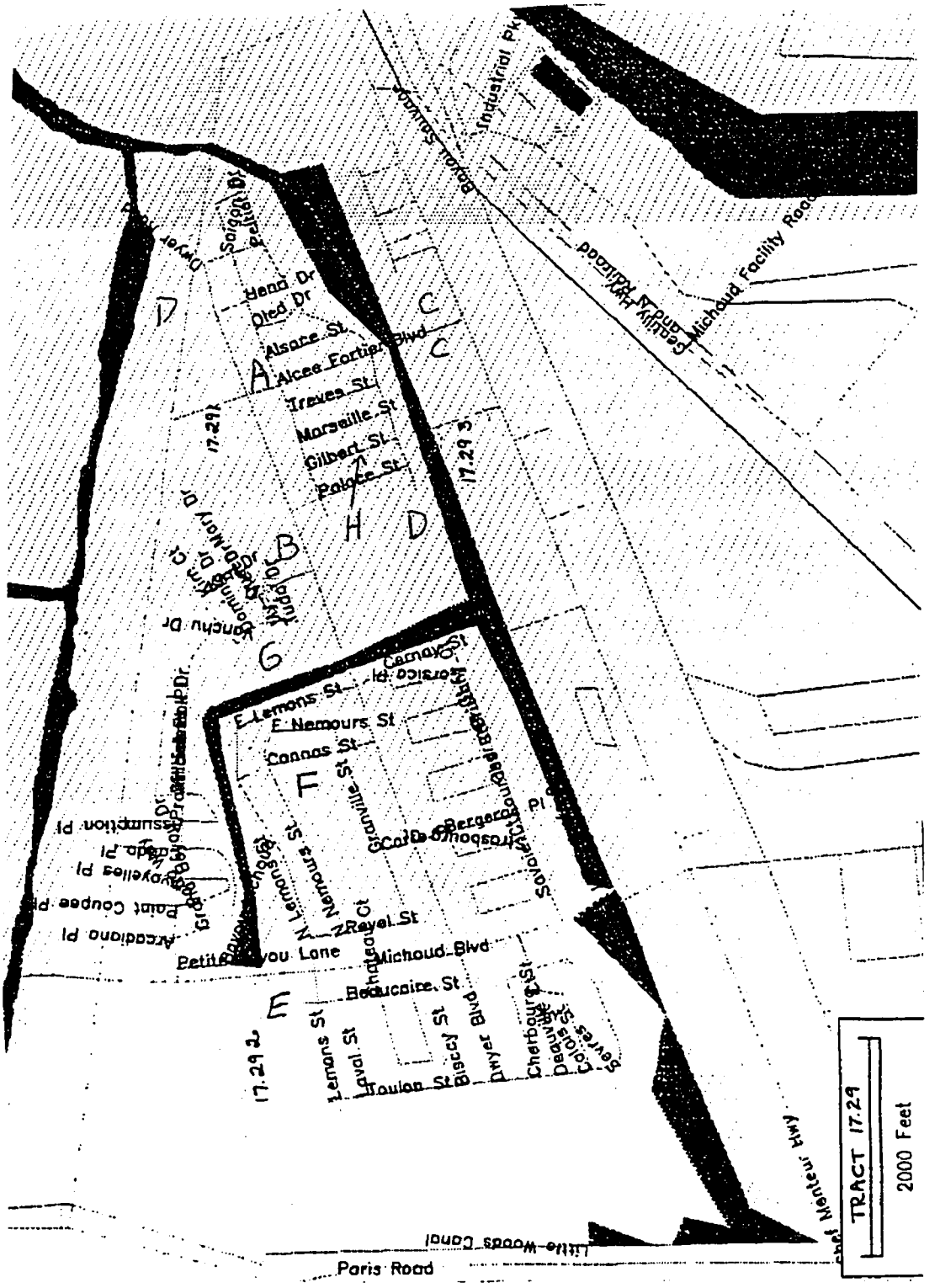

Figure 2: Map of the Vietnamese Community of New Orleans East.

of Vietnamese ethnicity today. Many of the Vietnamese who remain are older people. Often they have children and grandchildren in the surrounding neighborhood, but prefer having their own home in a place that is near to their children and grandchildren to moving in with their progeny. The grounds of these apartments are also the site of a Vietnamese community center and host the weekly Saturday morning market.

The community center is located on the edge of the apartment complex, on Peltier Boulevard near Henry Drive, and sits in front of the lake between the Versailles Arms Apartments and Chef Menteur Highway. This is a particularly popular place for children's activities, such as traditional dances by young children in a show every year at the time of the New Year festival.

Until some time in 1993, the weekly Saturday morning market was held at the Church on Dwyer Road. Most of my informants suggest that this was done for reasons of convenience: the vegetables sold in the market are grown in the local gardens (see below), most of which are located along the levee just behind the apartment complex.

The apartments have been somewhat eclipsed as a focal point of the community by the increasing number of Vietnamese who live in free-standing housing in the surrounding neighborhood, and by the growth of other foci in the community, in particular the growth of church organizations. Until 1985, the religious life of the neighborhood centered on a small chapel located at the corner of Alcee Fortier and Peltier. This is, looking at the map, just at the edge of the apartment complex. However, as we have seen, the axis of the neighborhood began to shift to the west. Vietnamese people began to settle in the suburban square just west of Alcee Fortier and just south of Dwyer Road, in houses on Saigon Drive, and Palace, Peltier, Gilbert, Marseilles, and Treves Streets as early as the late 1970s. By 1980, as we have seen, the demand for housing led a developer of Vietnamese ethnicity to build another subdivision to the northwest of Dwyer Road, shifting the neighborhood

even further to the west and making it even more suburban in character.

Vietnamese shops had already begun to open on Alcee Fortier Boulevard during the 1970s, since this was the commercial area that was nearest to the apartment complex. After the settlement in the suburban housing on the western side, Alcee Fortier was located directly in the center of the Vietnamese neighborhood. The street's role as an economic center was intensified and all of the shops on the street came under Vietnamese ownership (see below for a more detailed discussion of this business district).

As the Vietnamese neighborhood grew in size and became more suburban during the course of the early 1980s, Vietnamese families settled even further westward, into the vicinity of Etienne de Bore elementary school. By 1983, when the Archdiocese approved the building of a large Vietnamese church, the geographical center of the community lay much more to the northwest than it had earlier and the site where the church was actually built was a central location, within optimal walking distance for all of its parishioners. The geographical centrality of the church buildings, then, reflects the social centrality of the religious institution in the Versailles neighborhood.

These three centers, the apartments, the business district, and the church represent three stages in the neighborhood's development. First, there is the stage of initial settlement, when the life of the community gravitated around transitional housing. Second, there is the stage of developing economic institutions, which takes place during the expansion of the radius of settlement. Third, there is the stage of creating a large, institutionalized focal point for all community activities. Each of these stages marks a point in a gradual westward expansion. If we look at the map, we can see that these three centers now form an extended triangle with one corner, that of the apartments, located at about the intersection of Henry and Saigon Drive, another corner, that of the business district, located on Alcee Fortier near the Chef Menteur

Highway, and the third corner, that of the church and the institutions connected to it, located at Willowbrook and Dwyer. The lines of this triangle enclose the heaviest concentration of Vietnamese settlement in New Orleans East.

To the north and east of this neighborhood, apart from a small, well-to-do enclave of apartments and condominiums just off Michoud Boulevard, lies the Bayou Sauvage Wildlife Refuge. This is heavily forested wetland, protected both by law and dense vegetation from human habitation. In a sense, then, the physical isolation of this community mirrors its social isolation, or, it might be better to say, its "peninsulation", since both geographically and socially it is open to the outside world, but communication with the outside world only takes place along a limited set of channels.

The continuing westward movement has been a result of the fact this neighborhood is on this far eastern edge of the habitable parts of New Orleans, and as the neighborhood expands it necessarily moves westward. This has given rise to "pioneers" from this neighborhood, scattering in a semi-circle to the west as far as Read Boulevard. Some Vietnamese who have achieved middle-class status have simply built more expensive homes within the neighborhood, but others have actually moved out to surrounding areas. However, the "pioneers" generally do not cut their ties to the Vietnamese neighborhood. On the contrary, they remain within ten minutes driving distance to the neighborhood, attend religious services in the neighborhood, and retain it as the center of their social lives.

For the young people, also, contacts with the larger American society take place through a gradual and tentative westward movement. Most of the children in this neighborhood attend Etienne de Bore Elementary School, which lies within the Vietnamese neighborhood, but just to the west of the part of this geographic area that is almost exclusively Vietnamese. The majority then go on to Fanny C. Williams

Middle School, which is even further west, at the intersection of Dwyer Road and Bullard Avenue, on the outside of the Vietnamese neighborhood, but within the "pioneer fringe" of Vietnamese settlement in New Orleans East.

At the time of high school, the students from this area may take one of three routes. They may go to Sarah T. Reed High School, which, as the map indicates, lies on one of the westernmost boundaries of the residential subdivision in which the Vietnamese are located, on Michoud Boulevard just north of Lemans Street. This, as we can easily see, is the closest school and the largest number of Vietnamese students in ninth through twelfth grades do stay close to home and attend this institution. However, just as parents who have achieved some upward mobility in American society may become "pioneers" who settle in a wide western semi-circle around the Vietnamese neighborhood, many of the Vietnamese high school students who are children of these parents, or who have themselves achieved a high level of acclimation and success in the American academic system, attend a school on the western edge of this semi-circle of pioneer settlement.

Marion Abramson High School, on Read Boulevard near the I-10 Expressway, is, as will be discussed below, actually two schools in one: an honors program, attended by 10% of the students, and a regular program, attended by the others. Students who attend the regular program must live within the boundaries of the school district. Students who attend the honors component may come from any part of the city. Getting into the honors program for Vietnamese students is, then, the first step in a "westward" move that puts young people in increasing contact with the mainstream of American society, while retaining a base of support in the Versailles area.

Most area students attend these two schools, remaining in or near the neighborhood we see in Figure 2. However, a few of the very top students go even further "west". New Orleans Magnet Schools, as the

public schools for honors students are called, admit students who can pass their entrance tests from anywhere in the parish. Thus, increasing numbers of Vietnamese students attend Magnet schools elsewhere in New Orleans, including the top honors high school in New Orleans, Benjamin Franklin, which is located beside the campus of the University of New Orleans. As we will see, this outward and westward movement is encouraged and facilitated by the systems of relations among the Vietnamese people in this rather isolated little section of the map.

Housing in Versailles: Changes in Living Circumstances

Table 2.6 presents selected housing characteristics of Asians (as mentioned above, the category "Asians" in this tract is virtually synonymous with "Vietnamese") in Tract 17.29, as shown in the 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census. Although the majority of Asians remain renters, rather than owners, home ownership has increased markedly, from only 15% to over 37%, a greater than three-fold increase. This is especially impressive when we consider that nearly 30% of these Asians arrived in the United States after 1980 and over 10% arrived after 1985.

Asians have also increased greatly as a percentage of all home owners in the tract, increasing from 3% to 28% of all home owners in this ten-year period. Even this figure, however, does not take into account the growth in quality of housing for Vietnamese home owners. A walk or drive down Dwyer Boulevard shows even the casual observer several large, new homes, either recently constructed or in the process of construction. All of these new homes are Vietnamese-owned. Informants report that the owners are successful shop-owners or owners of fishing boats,

Housing units in this neighborhood are densely occupied, and the owner-occupied units are more densely occupied than the renter-occupied units. In part, this is because the Versailles Arms Apartment complex, the main source of rental housing, enforces limitations on the number of individuals who can live in each apartment. The density of occupation of renter-occupied units declined from 1980 to 1990 partially because

Table 2.6. Selected Housing Characteristics of Asians Residing in Tract 17.29 in 1980 and in 1990.

	1980	1990
% Units occupied by owner (N)	14.8 (86)	37.3 (358)
% All owner-occupied units occupied by Asians	2.8	27.8
Median persons per housing unit	5.96	4.78
Median persons per owner-occupied housing unit	5.71	5.67
Median persons per renter-occupied housing unit	6.01	4.17
Median rooms per housing unit	3.7	4.4
Median rooms per owner-occupied housing unit	4.5	4.7
Median rooms per renter-occupied housing unit	3.6	4.2

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

non-Vietnamese moved into the apartments in larger numbers in this period and partially because the apartment complex began enforcing rules regarding persons per room more strictly in this period (Melanie Ottaway, personal communication, 2/17/94). On this point, cultural geographers Airiess and Clawson (1991) observe, "When the refugees arrived it was common to have two or three families living in a two-bedroom Versailles Arms apartment. Strictly enforced HUD regulations, however, eventually limited the number of occupants to six, allowing only a small extended family to occupy a single apartment. The duplexes and single family houses permitted a larger extended family to remain intact" (p. 5).

The continuing high density of occupation of the owner-occupied units is a reflection of the way in which many people with more limited economic power manage to purchase houses. According to Monsignor Dominic Luong,

> Some Americans were asking me, 'how is it that you people just come to America and almost right away you can buy houses and have all these things?' So I took them out to visit some families to see how we live and how we manage to come up with the money to buy our homes. Two families will move in together and all work and save their money. Or someone who doesn't have a home will move in with a relative who owns one and won't have to pay any rent, so they can save all their money until they can buy a home of their own. (Luong, personal communication, 3/15/93)

In other words, ethnicity is a basis for a tightly-knit system of social relations that makes possible the pooling of resources. This system of relations is the source of much of the remarkable growth in home ownership that has taken place in this community.

Chapter Summary

The Vietnamese community of New Orleans East was established in 1975 in empty apartments in a declining part of the city, which has changed greatly in ethnic composition since their arrival. Secondary migration has led to a concentration of individuals from the same villages in Vietnam. Although they generally have low educational backgrounds, and tend to be poor, their community has been expanding

steadily. They have moved out of the original apartments and into free-standing housing, some of which were established by a Vietnamese developer.

Chapter 3. The Form of the Lotus: Economic and Social Structure

Economic Structure

Employment:

When the Vietnamese began to arrive in the Versailles area, in the 1970s, their economic future looked gloomy. A 1978 newspaper report, entitled "Severe Job Problem for Area Viets," reported, ""unemployment among Vietnamese refugees in the New Orleans area is more than four times as great as that of other non-whites, a city-sponsored study claims. The study, released by Mayor Ernest Morial Thursday morning at a press conference, says there is a 52 percent unemployment rate among Vietnamese while other non-white unemployment is projected at 11.8 percent in 1979" (Atkinson, 1978: 1-17-1). This estimate of the unemployment rate among the Vietnamese is a little curious, considering that the 1980 U.S. Census gives an unemployment rate of only 8.8% among Asians in Tract 17.29. It is likely however, that the study released by Mayor Morial used a somewhat different definition of unemployment than that used by the Census, a definition that took into account the extremely low rates of labor force participation among the Southeast Asian inhabitants of this neighborhood. Only about 47.5% of Asians over the age of 16 in this tract were in the labor force in 1980, in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of them were below retirement age (U.S. Census, 1983: P-265)

In terms of labor force participation and employment, the situation does not appear to have improved in the ten years from 1979 to 1989. By 1990, labor force participation had actually declined to 45% and unemployment among those counted as being in the labor force increased to 13.4%. In other words, the Vietnamese community in New Orleans East remained, in absolute terms, an economically disadvantaged one. However, while rates of labor force participation and unemployment remained low, there are indications that there was some upward mobility in the types of jobs held by those with jobs.

Table 3.1 gives occupations of Asians in Tract 17.29 in 1980 and 1990, according to the U.S. Census of Population and Housing. In this ten-year period, the number of employed Asian persons in this tract increased by 46%, from 733 to 1069. At both points in time, less than one percent of these employed persons were in executive, managerial, or administrative jobs. The number of individuals in professional specialty occupations decreased slightly, from just over 5% to about 2.5% of Asian workers. The proportion in sales occupations more than doubled, from just under 4% to nearly 10% of all employed Asians. Clerical-type jobs also showed a fairly large increase, from over 8% to over 13%. Insofar as Asians (a term virtually identical with "Vietnamese" in this tract) occupied jobs "white-collar" jobs by the early 1990s, these were primarily sales and clerical positions. The concentration in sales and clerical positions had also increased over the course of the 1980s, so that sales and clerical jobs made up about 56% of all white collar jobs among neighborhood Asians in 1980 and sales and clerical jobs made up about 78% of all white-collar jobs among neighborhood Asians in 1990. White-collar jobs in general had increased from about 21% of all jobs in 1980 to about 30% of all jobs in 1990.

Among blue-collar jobs, fishing (we can take all jobs in "farming, forestry and fishing" as jobs in fishing) appeared on the scene during the 1980s. Fishing is an exclusively male occupation in this community. 640 of the 1069 employed Asians in this census tract in 1990 were men, so although only about 6% of all Asians were in fishing, this probably shows that about one out of every ten working men in the Vietnamese community gave their occupations as fishermen. Even this may be an under-calculation, since Vietnamese fishing-boat owners often hire co-ethnics to work at low wages for cash, and the employees may be reluctant to report their occupations, since they do not report incomes to the Internal Revenue Service. The skilled or semi-skilled blue collar occupations listed in the census as "precision production, craft, and

Table 3.1. Occupations of Asians Aged 16 and Over in Tract 17.29 in 1980 and 1990.

	1980		1990	
	N	%	N	%
Employed Persons 16 and over	733	100	1069	100
Executive, Managerial, Admin.	5	.68	10	.94
Profess. Specialty	54	5.05	26	2.43
Technicians and Related Support Occupations	9	1.23	35	3.27
Sales Occupations	27	3.68	105	9.82
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	61	8.32	144	13.47
Private Household Occupations	---	---	---	---
Protective Service	11	1.50	---	---
Service Occupations, Except Protective	106	14.46	203	18.99
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	---	---	63	5.89
Precision Production, Craft, & Repair	129	17.60	178	16.5

(Table con'd)

	1980		1990	
	N	%	N	%
Machine Operators, Assemblers, & Inspectors	168	22.92	194	18.15
Transport. & Material Moving	---	---	24	2.25
Handlers, Equipment Cleaners, Helpers, & Laborers	163	22.29	87	8.14

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980 and 1990

repair" and "machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors" employed the largest proportions of Asian workers in both 1980 and 1990, about 40% in the earlier census year and about 35% in the later year. The generally unskilled positions under the category "handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers" declined markedly over the course of the 1980s, from 22.29% to 8.14%.

In general then, these figures suggest an increase in relatively more remunerative and more highly skilled jobs held by Asians in this community over the course of this ten-year period. However, to the extent that individuals in this neighborhood held white-collar jobs, these tended to be relatively low-level white collar jobs in sales and clerical positions. Moreover, it remained an overwhelmingly blue-collar community, although there is some indication of a decrease in unskilled jobs and an increase in semi-skilled and skilled jobs.

Table 3.2 compares the percentages of neighborhood Asians in occupational categories with percentages of the two other racial groups and with percentages of all Louisianians. This will enable us to see in what occupational areas the Vietnamese are over-represented or under-represented. Asians in this census tract were drastically under-represented in executive, managerial, and administrative occupations and in professional specialty occupations, compared to the other two racial groups in the tract and compared to all Louisianians. Neighborhood Asians were over-represented in farming, forestry and fishing, in precision production, and in machine operation. As noted, the concentration in fishing appears even greater when we consider that this is an exclusively male profession. The neighborhood gardeners, as I will discuss below, probably appear in the census as "unemployed," and it is very unlikely that any of them are listed as being in farming or forestry. Although the percentage of neighborhood Asians employed in the generally unskilled occupations of handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers declined from 1980 to 1990, the Asians are still over-represented in

Table 3.2. Percentages of Employed Persons in Three Racial Categories in Tract 17.9 and All Persons in Louisiana in Occupational Categories of the 1990 U.S. Census.

	Tract 17.29		State	
	Asian	Black	White	All
Executive, administrative managerial	.94	9.35	12.89	10.18
Professional specialty	2.43	15.38	30.93	13.78
Technical & related support	3.27	2.52	5.41	3.58
Sales	9.82	10.79	4.90	12.11
Administrative support	13.47	19.22	10.57	15.18
Private household	0.0	.57	0.0	.74
Protective service	0.0	5.11	0.0	2.04
Other service occupations	18.99	14.57	19.33	11.18
Farming, forestry, fishing	5.89	.57	2.58	2.40
Precision production, craft, repair	16.65	9.58	4.90	12.30
Machine operators, assemblers, inspectors	18.15	4.02	2.84	5.18
Transportation, material moving	2.25	6.71	3.61	5.41
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, laborers	8.14	1.61	2.06	3.96
Employed Persons (N)	1069	1743	388	1674324

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990

these jobs, compared to their neighbors and compared to other Louisianians.

Neighborhood Vietnamese Businesses:

The limited human capital of newly-arrived Vietnamese does not limit them to providing opportunities and direction for their young only through intact families and cooperative neighborhood associations. The mutual influences of social and financial capital are on-going and circular. The closed economic networks created by ethnic group membership can help to accumulate capital, to be invested in businesses that bring money into the group and keep it there. As individuals with a high degree of identification with the group acquire greater amounts of capital, these individuals tend to use their wealth not only to invest in privately-owned businesses, but also to fund public institutions. As I will discuss below, closed ethnic networks provide motivation for public investment by enveloping group members with money in a localized hierarchy of prestige and power. The public investment, in turn, enhances the value of social capital.

The public institutions that serve young people in the Versailles community, for example, are made possible by private contributions. The chapel on Peltier St., the church on Dwyer Boulevard, and the Child Development Center behind the church were all built with contributions from New Orleans area Vietnamese. The classrooms in the Child Development Center, similarly, are all furnished by private investment. The yearly awards given to the area's best students by the Vietnamese Educational Association are endowed primarily by local shop-owners and successful owners of fishing boats. In order to understand how these contributions are made possible, it is necessary to attempt to offer a rough sketch of the economic structure of the neighborhood.

Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) have argued that an ethnic community provides a demand for products that immigrant businesses are uniquely qualified to provide, since immigrant businessmen know the tastes and

buying preferences brought from their homeland. This ethnic market may be seen as a "niche", a position in the economic environment where immigrant businesses have an adaptive advantage. Establishing an ethnic market has been described as the first step in accumulating capital within an ethnic group (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Waldinger, et al., 1990).

Another niche may be that of markets that are not adequately served by the large organizations of the host economy, such as inner cities that have been abandoned by large grocery stores. Still other niches may be in businesses where immigrants can take advantage of a willingness to put in longer hours, work more holidays, and accept lower profits on sales than natives, or in unstable businesses that must meet continually changing demands that large, well-established mainstream firms cannot easily handle (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990).

Zhou (1989) has maintained that the economic development of New York's Chinatown has been largely due to Chinatown's dual economic structure: a "foreign" sector, consisting of products exported out of Chinatown and property and businesses outside of Chinatown owned by Chinese; and a "domestic" sector, consisting of businesses that serve the Chinatown market. Employing an analogy with international markets, Zhou has argued that a protected domestic sector helps Chinatown businesses accumulate capital, since it has a base of ethnic consumers and relatively cheap ethnic labor. The decided advantage within the domestic sector enables Chinatown businesspeople to compete, also, in the larger market.

When an ethnic group has both a market serving its own members and business enterprises that supply goods to those outside of its boundaries, it is uniquely situated to draw capital from the surrounding society and to invest capital in its own development. In New Orleans, the Vietnamese appear to be increasingly following an economic strategy of opening grocery stores in the high-risk, low-income neighborhoods

around housing developments. Self-employment has increased from virtual non-existence in 1980 (see Bankston and Zhou, 1992, for patterns of employment among Vietnamese people in the United States in 1992) to 8.4% of the New Orleans Vietnamese over 18 in 1990, according to data from the U.S. Census in those two years.

Estimates of self-employment are somewhat problematic in this community, and may be taken as establishing an absolute minimum. There is a great deal of marginal self-employment, in the form of side-walk sales of ethnic foods and groceries. The Saturday morning market, also, offers a form of weekend self-employment, primarily to middle-aged to older women.

It is difficult to ascertain just how much of this self-employment has grown within the Vietnamese community and how much of it has taken place in areas of the city in which other ethnic groups predominate. But it is safe to say that self-employment in both the "domestic" and "foreign" sectors is becoming increasingly common. In talking about the Vietnamese to non-Vietnamese New Orleanians, I have found a widespread perception that the Vietnamese are "taking over" the businesses in black neighborhoods. "Those people are just moving in and charging the poor people jacked-up prices and taking the money away from poor neighborhoods," exclaimed one white, 20 year-old male native New Orleanian. The names of small business people wounded or killed in robberies at small groceries reported in the local newspaper are generally Vietnamese. Moreover, a number of my informants within the Vietnamese community have reported that they, their parents, or other relatives own small groceries in low-income neighborhoods in various parts of New Orleans. "My uncle was shot and almost killed in his store," a 19 year-old female Vietnamese American college freshman told me; "having a grocery is really hard work and dangerous, but Vietnamese people keep doing it because its the only way for a lot of them to make a good living in America" (Dinh Nguyen, personal communication, 10/7/93).

A look at the business district of the Versailles community provides evidence that the Vietnamese community also provides a protected domestic market for ethnic investors. Although Vietnamese-owned businesses are scattered around the neighborhood, with several found particularly along the Chef Menteur Highway and on both sides of Michoud Boulevard near the Chef Menteur, the main shopping district for the Vietnamese community is located on Alcee Fortier (see Figure 2).

Table 3.3 shows a tally of types of businesses located in the commercial strip in July, 1994. All of these buildings were Vietnamese-owned and all of the shop-owners to whom business space was rented were Vietnamese.

The fifty permanent businesses located in this one to two block area are supplemented in the mornings, especially on Saturday mornings, by sidewalk vendors working out of trucks, who bring in fresh meat, seafood, live chickens and ducks, fruit, and other perishable goods. Geographers Christopher Airiess and David L. Clawson have remarked of this cluster of businesses:

> While specialized shopping needs require trips out of Versailles, the commercial strip enhances the enclave nature of the community by offering a full complement of basic services. A wide variety of ethnic foodstuffs, both homemade and imported, fills grocery shelves. Traditional folk medicines, used largely by the elderly, are available at one of the two pharmacies. Vietnamese fabrics, sold at the equivalent of a sundry goods store, allow for the persistence of customary dress. A video, music, and bookstore fulfills the need for Vietnamese culture items. The package mail-service business allows goods and money to be sent to friends and relatives in Vietnam. Notices of community events clutter store windows as do flyers promoting services offered by the Vietnamese throughout the New Orleans metropolitan area. So varied is the range of commercial functions that Vietnamese from as far away as the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida come to patronize the strip. (Airriess and Clawson, 1991: 10-11).

Vietnamese business people enjoy a "protected market". The ethnic foodstuffs, folk medicines, fabrics for *ao dai*, and Vietnamese language books and videos cannot be readily supplied by outsiders and there are guaranteed customers for these products. But doing business in an ethnic

Table 3.3. Vietnamese-Owned Businesses Located in the Vietnamese Commercial District on Alcee Fortier.

Type of Business	Number
Groceries	7
Restaurants	7
Night clubs	4
Retail apparel	4
Jewelry	3
Beauty salons	3
Gift shops	3
Vietnamese language bookstores	1
Vietnamese language videos	3
Legal and business services[a]	5
Insurance	2
Real estate	1
Engineering and contracting	1
Car audio	1
Modern drug stores	3
Traditional drug stores	3
Optometry clinic	1
Dental clinic	1
Medical clinic	1

[a] Includes notary services, sale of money orders, translation services, and others.

enclave can involve special expenditures, as well as profits. As members of a small, close-knit society, business people have extensive social ties, as well as economic ties, to those around them.

Because this is a relatively small set of people, with reference groups drawn from within the ethnic community, prestige serves as a way of keeping capital in the neighborhood. When a public institution, such as the Child Care Center, is built, contributions are solicited from all New Orleans area Vietnamese and both names of contributors and amounts of contributions are made public. "If they don't give enough," one informant observed, "everyone knows and they lose face. But if they give a lot of money, people will look up to them" (Haing Nguyen, personal communication, 4/12/94). In the following section, I will discuss how the closed system of ethnic ties tends not only to keep capital within the community, but also to direct some of that capital into collective projects.

An Alternative Banking System:

One may ask how it happens that residents of a neighborhood with such low reported individual incomes have managed to open so many small businesses, both inside and outside of the community. Even small businesses can require fairly large outlays of start-up capital, which, in American society at large, are generally provided by bank loans. For the Vietnamese, who have little collateral to obtain loans and often little familiarity with the American banking system, such loans are seldom available.

In response to this situation, the Vietnamese have adapted a loan system brought with them from Vietnam to their new environment. This system is similar, in many respects to the *kye* or "rotating loan" associations utilized by Korean Americans, discussed by Light and Bonacich (1988). Small groups, usually consisting of about 10 people, will open "banks" by putting up equal sums of money. Perhaps each of the 10 will put up $1000 for a sum of $10,000. This money, which is usually

held in restaurants or small groceries, can then be available to any of the "bank owners" who have need of money for business reasons, or it can be loaned out to others at interest.

Such a system is, of course, dependent on a high degree of trust among those who have access to it. Contracts that would be recognized by the American legal system are seldom, if ever, used. The trust is apparently generated by the same closed ethnic networks that direct some of the spending into shared projects. Even if an individual were willing to incur the disapproval of a primary reference group, it is unlikely that anyone could abscond with funds held in common, since it would be very difficult for a Vietnamese American to drop out of the ethnic group and disappear into the American mainstream.

This informal system of banking has the additional advantage of allowing its participants to bypass the income tax structure to some extent, thereby directing more funds into the community, rather than into the ravenous maws of city, state, and federal taxation. Measuring the extent of the informal economy of this community is probably impossible and business-owners and wage-earners are understandably uncomfortable with outsiders asking questions about how much of their income they pay taxes on.

When I was writing down the names of the businesses on Alcee Fortier, for example, a number of people came out to ask me what I was doing and if I worked for "Uncle Sam" or the IRS. One older woman, who owned several buildings which she rented out to businesses, became friendly when I explained the nature of my research and assured her that I had no connection to any government agency and was not seeking any information that would be of use to the Internal Revenue Service. She explained her concern to me:

> I just a poor old Vietnamese woman and I no have any education, you know. I don't know if I accidentally forget to pay some taxes. I don't know about taxes, you know. But just in case I forget, I don't want Uncle Sam come around make trouble for me.

One may wonder just how "poor" or "uneducated" someone who has acquired substantial real estate interests may be, or how someone who owns buildings on a street that has several businesses that specialize in income taxes could "accidentally forget" about taxes. The point is, however, that an informal banking system can create an unofficial "incentive zone" for ethnic businesses, in which there are tax breaks for keeping money inside of the ethnic network of social relations.

The Gardens of Versailles: Jobs for Vietnamese Elders:

While the business district provides Vietnamese people in this area with a commercial center, at the margins of the neighborhood may be found small-scale agricultural districts. The "Vietnamese Gardens" have become something of a local tourist attraction and they have attracted the attention of an ethnobotanist (Luong, personal communication, 5/24/93) as well as the attention of at least one anthropologist (see Nash, 1992: 6-7) and two geographers (see Airriess and Clawson, 1994). It would be difficult to judge the contribution of the gardens to the economic life of the community, since no records are kept on how much is produced. Because some of the gardeners receive public assistance, and none of them pay taxes on earnings from their products, they are understandably reticent to discuss profits. When outsiders ask them about earnings from gardening, they invariably claim to grow primarily for their use. But while much of the produce is indeed consumed by growers, given away to extended family and neighbors, or bartered, it has apparently also become one important means of bringing capital into the community.

During the Spring and Summer of 1993 and of 1994, I witnessed large produce trucks in the neighborhood. According to one informant, at least two large produce trucks visit the neighborhood every two weeks during harvest season. These trucks bring the harvest to other Vietnamese communities around the U.S., selling vegetables, produced mainly by older people, for use in Vietnamese dishes, and even supplying restaurants. In addition to serving an economic function, the gardens are also very

revealing with regard to social relations, and with regard to the place of the elderly in this ethnic community. The original Vietnamese gardens were planted between the levee and the bayou at the northern boundary of Tract 17.29, past the northern terminus of Alcee Fortier Boulevard and behind the Versailles Arms Apartments. Today, however, tracts of swampy land at the western end of Peltier Drive have also been converted to gardens (see map). According to longtime Versailles Arms manager Melanie Ottaway, the gardens began in the tension between the desires of apartment dwellers to maintain traditional Vietnamese gardens and rules governing use of apartment complex territory. "They always liked to have gardens to grow their vegetables and the spices for their foods," Ms. Ottaway explained. "People started planting gardens out in front of their apartments. This was against the rules, but we didn't want to come down too hard, so we overlooked it. But the gardens kept getting bigger and bigger, and eventually the whole apartment complex was going to be one big garden. We had to put an end to it" (Ottaway, personal communication, 2/17/94).

Many apartment dwellers were, understandably, upset at the prospect of being forced to give up their gardens, which probably provided important dietary supplements in quite a few cases. Officials of Versailles Arms Apartments brought the issue to the attention of Catholic Church officials, since as we have seen, Catholic organizations settled the Vietnamese in New Orleans and have been the primary link between the Vietnamese and mainstream American society.

In 1978, the Archdiocese of New Orleans contacted the New Orleans East Corporation, one of the land development corporations that had undertaken the creation of new neighborhoods in the wetlands of Eastern New Orleans in the 1960's. This corporation had no immediate plans for the wetlands to the north of the levee and it gave permission, through an agreement with the Archdiocese for Vietnamese to use it for private gardens. Since 1978, the Vietnamese gardens have continued to grow at the

boundaries of the neighborhood. The only threat to this activity occurred after the savings and loan company that owned the New Orleans East Corporation was taken over by the Resolution Trust Corporation of the United States Government in the 1980s and the New Orleans East Corporation ceased to exist. The 25-acre strip of tilled land by the levee, along with about 3,000 acres of additional wetland, was purchased from the RTC by a lawyer, Mr. John Cummings. While the gardeners feared the worst, however, Mr. Cummings gave the lie to countless lawyer jokes by supporting continued cultivation.

On Saturday, August 20,1994, Mr. Cummings met with a group of about 20 gardeners and agreed to lease the land to them for a nominal fee. Mr. Cummings originally wanted to have each gardener sign an individual lease, since Louisiana law could create doubt as to his ownership of the land if he allowed unrestricted squatting, but the gardeners were afraid of complications with their Social Security of Supplementary Security Income if they were to become recognized agriculturalists. Once more, the Vietnamese Catholic Church acted as representative for a body of individuals in dealing with American society. Monsignor Dominic Luong signed a $1.00 monthly lease with Mr. Cummings on behalf of the gardeners and the landlord stated that it was his intention to donate this nominal rent to the church. The lawyer also expressed enthusiasm for the industry of the Vietnamese and offered to clear 20 additional acres for cultivation and said that he would consider hiring rangers to patrol the land to help prevent damage to the gardens by wild animals and the vandalism of children (for a newspaper report of this meeting, see Treadway, 1994: B-3).

The fact that the Vietnamese Church, through the leadership of Monsignor Luong, acted as representative of a segment of the community in a secular issue is revealing. But this is not the only aspect of the gardens of sociological interest. The gardening also reveals something about the role of older people in the neighborhood, and about relations

between individuals and community within this Vietnamese residential enclave.

Gardening is an activity of people past what we would consider "retirement age." The average age of the Vietnamese gardeners is 66 (Treadway, 1994: B-3). Most of the gardeners have limited, if any, English, and would have difficulty finding jobs. Thus, the gardens provide a place and an activity for those who would otherwise not have a place and would not have anything to do in the New World. It is a piece of unintentional social symbolism that a Vietnamese American community, with its provenance in agricultural Vietnam, has several of its physical boundaries demarcated by completely unassimilated agriculturalists, who, as older people, are living memories of the previous homeland.

These older people, it is important to note, would be unable to assimilate to the larger American economic environment if they could not find a niche in the relatively protected ethnic environment. As one gardener, a sixty-two year old woman, said through an interpreter, "I do not know what else I could do. I don't know any English, and I'm too old to get a job. I like to garden and it is the only thing for me" (H. Tran, personal communication, 6/21/94).

Having community roles for older people, such as gardens or work in families, does more than provide a steady supply of fresh vegetables. Bringing an indeterminate amount of capital into the area is only one of the functions of this agricultural sector of an ethnic economy. It also helps to maintain a multiple-generation society in which youth are directed by the expectations of their elders, since the elders continue to play an active part in the life of the neighborhood.

The gardens are also an important piece in the jigsaw puzzle of ethnic community integration, by supplying Vietnamese foods to be sold in the open-air market and in the businesses. This not only has the material function of helping to maintain the enclave economy, it also

enhances community members' identification with the ethnic group. "The persistence of traditional foodways afforded by market gardens," observed the geographers who studied the gardens, "functions as a powerful symbol in the maintenance of ethnic identity" (Airriess and Clawson, 1994: 30).

Economy and Social Ties: Prestige and Power as Economic Motivators

One of the basic problems for any social group is that of getting group members to contribute to the well-being of the group as a whole, instead of seeking personal advantage. In his recent book on the problem of social order, Dennis Wrong has pointed out that the word "altruism" (literally, "other-ism" from the Latin word "alter," which means "other") was coined by the father of sociology, Auguste Comte (Wrong, 1994: 193). In an argument reminiscent of Schopenhauer's philosophical treatment of the subject, Wrong argues that it is difficult to establish a clear distinction between egoism and altruism, since selves are constructed out of identification with other objects, especially with other selves (pp. 194-201).

In many cases, however, it is unnecessary to call on an "enlarged sense of self" in order to account for the contributions of individuals to others. Very often in our socio-economic lives, we "get by giving." If people put a great deal of effort into acquiring money because money is admired by others, it can hardly be wondered that they are so often willing to give that same money away in order to purchase even more admiration or prestige. When individuals operate within a closed circle of social ties, such as an ethnic community, it may be argued that prestige acts as a more consistent influence on those seeking it than it does in a society where people are subject to expectations from a wide variety of diverse, unconnected social affiliations.

This idea may be illustrated by the apparent success the Vietnamese community of Versailles has had in raising money for public projects, in spite of the community's relative poverty. The Child Development Center, where after-school classes are held and where child-care is provided was

built with contributed funds. At present, there are plans to greatly enlarge this center, with further contributions.

Donors to such projects enjoy the prestige of having their names publicly announced, usually during the Sunday morning sermons. In 1983, for example, before the construction of the Vietnamese church, it was made known that the first individual to contribute $10,000 would receive top honors as a benefactor of the community. "The most important thing for people here," one informant told me, "is what their neighbors think of them."

The prestige derived from contribution to collective projects may be readily converted to social influence. Loose circles of allegiances tend to form around influential individuals. These individuals may exercise power through formal organizations, such as those discussed below, or simply through their influence over their neighbors. If the influential individuals are Catholic, they are the ones who will become "zone leaders": the entire church parish is divided into a grid of zones, in which the leaders represent the people who live in their zones in meetings where specific church policies and activities decided. If they are Buddhist, they have privileged access to the Buddhist monk from the West Bank community who maintains contact with the Catholic pastor.

It is not prestige alone, of course, that confers power. Since all of the money for neighborhood projects comes from local businessmen, well-to-do businessmen have a great deal of power. According to one anthropologist who has studied this community for a number of years, the pastor of the church not only represents the Vietnamese neighborhood to the outside world, he also represents the goals and desires of the influential citizens to the neighborhood itself.

"They pull Monsignor's strings," Nash remarked of the businessmen and fishermen who form the membership of the area's civic organizations (Nash, personal communication, 9/9/1993). Whether the pastor of the church leads or follows his parishioners, however, the centrality of the

church in this community helps to coordinate cooperation among elites. Factionalization has been described by those involved in refugee work as a constant danger within Vietnamese American communities (Diana Bui, personal communication, 6/6/94). When this danger is avoided however, as seems to be the case in the community under examination at present, the prestige and power structures generated by relatively closed ethnic social circles provides an additional advantage in directing the flow of capital. Money is brought into the community from outside, it is largely kept inside by a specialized ethnic market, and the spending of it is channeled into collective projects such as the Child Development Center and the projects of the Educational Association by the narrow avenues of seeking prestige created by these closed social circles. Thus, despite the relatively low level of individual incomes in this neighborhood, this pattern of social relations, based on shared ethnicity, makes possible a relatively high level of mobilization of capital.

Social Structure: The Role of Formal Organizations

Charles C. Muzny, in his study of the Vietnamese community of Oklahoma City, notes "when one investigates the leadership of the Vietnamese organizations in Oklahoma City, it becomes apparent that there is a limited core of 'elites' within the Vietnamese groups" (Muzny, 1989: 171-2). Those familiar with Vietnamese communities around the United States have observed this tendency to form task-oriented organizations around individuals who have both prestige and special abilities to achieve tasks. For example, Diana Bui, Director of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center in Washington D.C. (formerly known as the Indochinese Refugee Action Center), which coordinates activities among the U.S. Government recognized self-help groups known as Mutual Assistance Organizations, remarked in a telephone interview in June, 1994, that "the Vietnamese are forever forming organizations, and its always just a few people who run them" (Bui, personal communication, 6/6/94).

Rose (1981) observed that "one example of the importance of community is seen in the abundance of mutual aid associations of various kinds." Rose noted that by 1980 some 260 such associations had been identified nationwide. These associations, led by individuals who can find jobs for people and help them in dealing with the school system provided institutional means of helping Vietnamese deal with the largely alien world of American society (Rose, 1981: 314-315).

As in other Vietnamese communities, the leaders of New Orleans community organizations tend to be well-educated males who arrived in the United States in 1975 or shortly thereafter. They tend to be professionals, rather than shop-owners, fishing boat owners, or other small businessmen, although the businessmen provide the organizations with most of their funding and may be presumed therefore to have some influence over organization goals and activities. All of these community leaders know one another and maintain cooperative relations.

The importance of organizations and associations to the process of adaptation in this neighborhood has been recognized by two researchers examining the cultural geography of the residential enclave:

> Beyond the family context, a number of mutual aid relationships exist which further integrate the community. Common and less formal activities often include assistance in shopping, transportation, language translation, and employment. More formal mutual aid relationships include committees to collect funds for burials, the construction of fishing boats, aid for new refugee arrivals, a men's club to promote neighborhood safety, and a war veterans association. many of these relationships did not exist in Vietnam, but emerged to meet the new socioeconomic requirements. Each serves to bond individual families into the enclave's larger community (Airriess and Clawson, 1991: 5-6).

The Catholic church provides the physical location for many meetings and other activities. However, Buddhist leaders from the much smaller Vietnamese communities elsewhere in the New Orleans participate in several of the organizations, such as the Vietnamese Educational Association, and the Catholic priests and major Buddhist figures, such as Luong Truong of Marrero, General Secretary of the Buddhist Fellowship

of Louisiana, maintain personal ties with one another (Msgr. Dominic Luong, personal communication, 5/24/93). In this way, religious institutions are not simply normative in nature, providing abstract symbols of ethnic identity, but they also provide connecting pathways among ethnic group members.

An additional observation that should become clear in the following description of the most important formal organizations is that many of them are actually extremely "informal." Leaders are often simply recognized rather than elected, and the leaders often delegate authority or tasks simply by asking someone to do a job. It should be stated that these are just some of the most notable organizations, the ones that seem to have the greatest influence in the community, and the ones I have heard referred to most often.

The Vietnamese-American Voters' Association:

The Vietnamese-American Voters' Association was formed in the late 1970s. It has no official membership roster and collects no regular dues, but all Vietnamese in the New Orleans area who are American citizens are considered to be members. Funding, when needed, comes from contributions. Although this association can serve a variety of political purposes, its primary goals are: (1) to enable Vietnamese to take and pass the test for U.S. citizenship, and (2) to provide information on voting and to encourage local Vietnamese to vote in local, state, and national elections.

The VAVA has two or three officials (depending on how we define an official). Mr. To Van Nguyen is president of the organization, and has functioned in this capacity for the past decade. Ms. Mai Nguyen (no relation to Mr. To Van) is secretary and treasurer. "Sometimes she's the secretary and sometimes she's the treasurer," Mr. To Van informed me, "it depends on what we need" (To Van Nguyen, personal conversation, 4/22/94) Father Peter Newman, a Vietnamese priest at Mary Queen of Vietnam Church who anglicized his name while studying in an American seminary, serves

as advisor to the VAVA, helping to provide church cooperation in specific activities. Other positions may be created when needed. "If I need someone to do something, I just go and ask them," Mr. To Van said (To Van Nguyen, personal communication, 4/22/94).

The president, a dental technician, achieved his position both on the basis of his personal prestige and his ability to perform civic tasks in both Vietnamese and American environments. A former South Vietnamese military officer, he is widely respected and therefore has claims on loyalties throughout the community. Moreover, his English is excellent and he apparently has a detailed knowledge of the American political system and of the procedures for becoming a nationalized citizen. He is widely seen as someone who can "get things done." One of the workers at Associated Catholic Charities proclaimed to me, "Oh, To Van is just wonderful! When we need someone to translate for us, or to do some other job, we can always call him, and if he can't find time to do it, he always knows someone else he can get for us."

During one of my conversations with Monsignor Dominic Luong, Pastor of Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, Msgr. Luong mentioned that candidates for the New Orleans City Council had been calling, seeking Vietnamese-American votes. "I just gave them To Van Nguyen's phone number," Msgr Luong said, "he deals with things like that." I have not been able to establish for certain whether the Vietnamese of Versailles vote as a block, according to the direction of community leaders, but my own observations about the role of leaders in the neighborhood suggest that it would be fairly safe to assume that they do.

For the most part, however, the VAVA is much more concerned with getting local people to become citizens than with elections. Some idea of how this is done may be derived from a short description of a typical meeting to prepare prospective citizens.

At 9:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 24, 1994, immediately after Mass at the Vietnamese Church, a group of about 40 adults, with roughly equal

numbers of males and females and ranging in age from the early 20s to late 60s, gathered beside the Child Development Center behind the Church. After a few minutes, To Van Nguyen appeared from the Church and led the group up the stairs in the Center, where he opened up two of the classrooms. In classroom 4, Ms. Mai Nguyen seated herself at a desk with a typewriter and a stack of fingerprint cards. Each prospective citizen filed by her desk and gave her personal information which she typed onto the fingerprint cards. Then, she took the registration fees that would have to be turned in with the cards when applying to take the citizenship test. Across the hall, in room 8, To Van Nguyen set up a camera to take ID pictures to be attached to each card. Once these cards were ready, on following weekdays, the president of the VAVA would arrange for groups of prospective citizens to be taken to be officially fingerprinted and to turn in their citizenship applications.

Occasionally, the VAVA will also involve itself in active politics, if the issues immediately concern the well-being of the Vietnamese neighborhood. In 1990, for example, Waste Management, Inc. attempted to contract with the city of New Orleans to establish a landfill in the wetlands immediately adjoining the Vietnamese concentration. Joel Waltzer of the Tulane Environmental Law Center, seeking help in opposing a threat to the wetlands of Bayou Sauvage, contacted the Vietnamese Church. Upon learning of the proposed landfill and agreeing that it would not be in the interest of their neighborhood, Father Peter Newman and To Van Nguyen undertook to mobilize the area in protest. Underscoring the blurring of distinctions between religious and secular sectors, nuns played a prominent part in handing out flyers and otherwise communicating the issues and Msgr. Luong talked about the issue from the pulpit. The VAVA erected a large sign on Chef Menteur Highway denouncing the proposed landfill and helped to arrange transportation to New Orleans City Hall when the City Council met to discuss the landfill. Even though the City Council Meetings were held in the middle of the day on a

weekday, several hundred Vietnamese-American protesters showed up, placards in hand. The landfill was eventually defeated (for a more detailed description of these events, see Bankston, 1991).

The Vietnamese Educational Association:

The Vietnamese Educational Association is, from the perspective of the present study, one of the most important formal organizations in this ethnic concentration, since it focuses directly on promoting academic achievement among young Vietnamese. It was formed in 1985, according to Monsignor Dominic Luong, and was, by his account, his brainchild (Luong, personal communication, 3/15/93). Although anyone who becomes involved with this association or works with it may be considered a member, at its core, it consists of a Board of Advisors of about 15 members, from all over the New Orleans area, including the smaller Vietnamese neighborhoods in Woodlawn, Harvey, Marrero, and Bridge City, as well as the large Vietnamese neighborhood in Versailles.

Again, however, the appearance of a formal structure rests on a much more informal leadership pattern based on both prestige and specialized competence. Although Monsignor Dominic provided the inspiration for the Educational Association, the two primary movers within this organization are Brother John Nhon, a Christian Brother who teaches at the Catholic De La Salle high school; and Mr. Ngoc Thanh Nguyen, a teacher at Etienne Bore (a public elementary school located close to the center of the Vietnamese neighborhood - see Figure 2) and a part-time teacher of adult English classes for Associated Catholic Charities.

According to one informant who regularly attends meetings of the Educational Association, members of the Board of Advisors are appointed on the advice of Brother John and Mr. Ngoc. These two men decide when someone should be asked to serve on the Board, based on their knowledge of the important and influential figures in Versailles and the smaller Vietnamese communities around the New Orleans area. When they decide

that a particular individual should serve, they inform Monsignor Dominic and the Monsignor sends a letter of invitation to that person (Tony Tran, personal communication, 4/14/94). The Board of Advisors approves projects of the Educational Association, which may be suggested by any interested party but which are usually suggested by Monsignor Dominic, Brother John, or Mr. Ngoc, and helps to secure community support and raise funds for those projects.

Brother John Nhon and Ngoc Thanh Nguyen, like To Van Nguyen, hold leadership positions both because of their special abilities and because of their prestige among New Orleans area Vietnamese. As teachers working in local, these two men understand the educational system and they are able to set goals that utilize that system effectively and can establish appropriate means of preparing students. Like the Vietnamese leaders Muzny (1989) found in Oklahoma City, and like most Vietnamese leaders in New Orleans, both arrived with the "first wave" of Vietnamese in the United States in 1975, and they both speak excellent English. Both also have organizational ties, aside from their work in the schools, that help them to get things done: Brother John is part of a non-Vietnamese religious order (the Christian Brothers) and Mr. Ngoc works evenings for Catholic Charities and has extensive contacts in that organization.

The two chief projects of the Vietnamese Educational Association are: (1) after-school classes held in the Child Development Center behind the church, and (2) yearly awards granted to Vietnamese students who have excelled in the public school system in a ceremony usually held on church grounds on a Sunday in May or June, immediately after school has closed for the summer. Until about 1992, after-school classes were offered, on a voluntary basis to high school students. The subjects that were emphasized in these classes were English language and Vietnamese language, although other academic subjects were also offered from time to time. English language classes served the needs of relatively new arrivals, or of those whose English skills were weak in spite of growing

up in the U.S., and the Vietnamese language classes served the native-born and those who had lived in the U.S. since early childhood. The Vietnamese language classes, which were taught by a Vietnamese priest attached to Mary Queen of Vietnam Church, placed a heavy emphasis on reading and writing skills, since many young people who learned to speak their parental language in the home had never had an opportunity to develop literacy. These classes drew students from the West Bank of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish, as well as from this ethnic concentration in New Orleans East.

After 1992, the after-school classes began to shift their attention from high school students to students in the elementary schools. Mr. Ngoc Thanh Nguyen explained that "we feel that it's best to start when they're young, and that way we can have more of an effect." Mr. Ngoc also said that preparing students to take entrance tests to get into magnet schools or honors programs within the local public schools was one of the major reasons for focusing on younger children (Ngoc Thanh Nguyen, personal communication, 11/21/93).

In addition to this valuable work of preparing students for academic achievement, the Educational Association also helps to recognize achievement and to bring excellence in schools into the ethnic society. Every year, the Educational Association contacts the Orleans Parish School Board and obtains the names of Vietnamese students who have excelled overall or in particular subjects. At the annual awards ceremony, during which the neighborhoods are filled with neighborhood people, students are given awards for their achievements. In this way, school performance becomes a public issue rather than a private concern; it becomes a source of public honor that reflects on family and community instead of remaining a solitary matter of improving the life chances of single individuals. Unfortunately, in 1994, the Annual Awards Ceremony was not held. Monsignor Dominic Luong explained that this was because the Orleans Parish School Board had not provided the names of the

students to be honored, and he attributed this to the change in school superintendents in this year.

Political Prisoner Veterans Union (H.O. Union):

The Political Prisoner Veterans Union was formed in 1993, to address problems in adaptation to American life on the part of men who were formerly political prisoners in Vietnam, following the fall of South Vietnam and the unification of the country in 1975. The Union is more commonly known as the "H.O. Union." "H.O." apparently refers to the two letters that preceded identification numbers of political prisoners in Vietnam (so far I have found no one, including former prisoners, who knows exactly what these letters stand for).

Community leaders noted that many former political prisoners were having greater difficulty than other resettled adult Vietnamese in adjusting to life in America. Many were suffering from feelings of isolation. Since the political prisoners were disproportionately former South Vietnamese officers many, also, endured feelings of disappointment and depression over the their descent from positions of relatively high prestige.

These observations were communicated by community leaders to Monsignor Dominic Luong, who asked Sue Weishar of the Office of Refugee Resettlement of Associated Catholic Charities to help him organize a meeting of political prisoners, since ACC had lists of all resettled political prisoners. On August 18, 1993, Ms. Weishar sent letters, in English and in Vietnamese, to all former political prisoners, inviting former political prisoners to meet to discuss ways in which the process of adjustment could be made easier for them.

On September 26, 1993, the former political prisoners of New Orleans East met at the Phan Boi Chau Cultural Center on Michoud Boulevard. Ms. Weishar explained to me that she attended this meeting, but that it was actually run entirely by the former political prisoners themselves. "All I did was to send out the letters," she said, "after

they got together, they pretty much did everything" (Sue Weishar, personal communication, 6/14/94).

It was decided at this meeting that a cooperative organization be formed. Mr. Tran Van Huong has been the leader and most active representative of this organization throughout its existence. It functions primarily as a "support group," providing members with a sense of belonging, with a forum to discuss their problems, and with others they can call on for help. It also organizes social activities and helps with festivities in the yearly *Tet*, or New Year Celebrations.

Versailles Neighborhood Association:

The Versailles Neighborhood Association is an interesting organization, because it is one of the few organizations in this neighborhood that attempts to cut across racial boundaries. It is essentially a "neighborhood watch," in which people who live in the area attempt to watch one another's houses to keep crime down. It is estimated that participants in the Neighborhood Association are approximately 70% Vietnamese and 30% African American. Despite the predominantly Vietnamese character of the Neighborhood Association, its current president, Mr. Jesse Hampton, is an African American.

Dung Lac: A Youth Program:

The *Dung Lac* organization will be discussed in greater detail below, where I address the problem of "underachievers" and "outsiders" among the youth of this neighborhood. Father Andrew, a Vietnamese priest who preceded Monsignor Dominic as parish priest, recognized that there were growing numbers of high school dropouts among local Vietnamese adolescents who had been reared in the United States. To counter this trend, in 1991 Father Andrew set up the *Dung Lac* (named after a Vietnamese religious martyr) organization, which featured week-end retreats and service projects such as cleaning up the neighborhood. Later that same year, Father Andrew was transferred to the smaller Vietnamese community in Avondale, in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, and the

Dung Lac ceased to exist. In April or May of 1994, Tony Tran, a social worker in the Versailles office of Associated Catholic Charities began attempting to revive the *Dung Lac* organization.

At first, Tran attempted to work with the young people by organizing evening sports activities, with the eventual objective of getting them into "Life Planning" courses that would give them counseling and provide them for entry into the world of work. As I will discuss further below, however, he found that the most successful part of his work was getting parents into something of a "neighborhood parent watch" in which he identified parents of problem children, provided them with lists of the "at risk" young people, and encouraged parents to assist one another in watching over the activities of one another's children. It is fairly clear that the success of this type of program supports the thesis of this dissertation that it is a pattern of cooperation within the ethnic community, rather than characteristics of individuals or individual families, that promotes desirable outcomes among young people and avoids undesirable outcomes.

Chapter Summary

Although this community remains a relatively low-income one, the decade between 1980 an 1990 saw an increase in employment in skilled jobs, generating more money within the neighborhood. Self-employment has emerged as an economic strategy in this period. Self-employment is made possible by the very fact of concentration, since it creates a "niche" for ethnic goods and by cooperative forms of social organization such as informal banking. The highly interconnected nature of social ties within this community also help to make capital from businesses available for spending on public projects. This high level of social integration and organization also leads to the creation of formal associations, some of which are directly involved in promoting the social adaptation of young people.

Part II. Vietnamese Students and American Schools

Chapter 4. Young Vietnamese Americans and Their Adaptation to the School Environment

While one may be critical of attempts to present the Vietnamese and other new Asian groups as "model minority members," arguing, as Hamamoto (1994: 165-173) does, that such popular stereotypes both overlook the many social problems of the new Asian groups and gloss over racial barriers to the full acceptance of even minority overachievers in American society, there is evidence to suggest that Vietnamese young people are adapting surprisingly well to the American educational system. This high level of adaptation is especially marked when we consider that Vietnamese young people appear to be disproportionately excelling, not only by the standards of expectations for a new immigrant group, but also by comparison to segments of the established population.

Paul J. Rutledge, in a recent book on Vietnamese Americans remarks, "educationally, Vietnamese refugees are succeeding at an exponential rate" (Rutledge, 1992: 148). After citing numerous examples of individual Vietnamese students who have shown outstanding performance in American schools, Rutledge concludes that " the success of Vietnamese-Americans in high schools and universities across America forecasts the benefits gained from the resettlement of refugee peoples. Within a short period of time, the costs necessitated in the resettlement process will be overshadowed by the financial benefits, both direct and indirect, derived from the contributions made to the economic development of America by refugee-Americans" (Rutledge, 1992: 148).

Rutledge's glowing praise for Vietnamese-American students, and their potential contribution to American society, is regularly echoed by teachers who have contact with these students. However, the evidence of Vietnamese American academic success is by no means limited to generalizations from anecdotes. Vietnamese students have been found to receive an average score above the national average on standardized achievement tests such as the California Achievement Test. In math, especially, they seem to have outstripped other young people. "Half the

(Vietnamese) children studied obtained (math) scores in the top quartile," reports an article in a recent issue of the *Scientific American*. "Even more spectacularly, 27 percent of them scored in the 10th decile - better than 90 percent of the students across the country and almost three times higher than the national norm" (Caplan et al., 1992: 38).

Census data can provide additional evidence of the academic adaptation of Vietnamese young people. While we cannot use the Census to examine how well students do in school, of course, simply staying in school and continuing through higher education are important indicators of successful adaptation to the academic environment. The 1990 U.S. Census shows that 49.3% of Vietnamese Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 were enrolled in college or another form of higher education beyond the high school level. By contrast, only 39.5% of white Americans and only 28.1% of black Americans in the same age group were in college. High school dropout rates among young Vietnamese Americans were also lower than those of other Americans. Only 6.5% of Vietnamese Americans from 16 to 19 were neither enrolled in high school nor high school graduates, compared to 9.8% of white American youth and 13.7% of black American youth.

Theoretical Explanations of Vietnamese American Academic Success

Most attempts to explain Vietnamese achievement in the school environment have approached the problem as a part of the more general issue of Asian American academic achievement. On this general issue, Sue and Okazaki (1990) observe, "in trying to explain the educational achievement of Asian Americans, the tendency has been to compare and contrast genetic and cultural explanations" (p. 919). Genetic explanations address the problem by citing the performance of Asians on IQ tests and other measures of ability as evidence of higher levels of innate intellectual ability among Asians. For example, Lynn (1987) uses IQ scores to make this argument. However, genetic explanations have not

been widely accepted, in part, perhaps, because of the political problems posed by claiming inherent intellectual superiority for any particular ethnic or racial group. Political values aside, though, a number of scholars have argued that aptitude itself is achieved rather than inborn, and that therefore the same developmental or cultural factors that enable children to do well in school also enable them to make high scores on SAT tests or IQ tests (Owen, 1985; Crouse & Trusheim, 1988).

Cultural explanations of Asian American scholastic success have received wider acceptance than genetic explanations. "Because the evidence does not support a genetic interpretation," according to Sue and Okazaki (1990), "many have assumed that Asian cultural values, beliefs, and practices are responsible for their academic achievements" (p. 919). Attempts to deal specifically with the Vietnamese have taken this cultural approach, and, as in cultural explanations of academic success among other Asian American groups, families have been seen as the primary carriers of culture(see, for example, Ramirez and Price-Williams, 1976).

Cultural explanations, with the family seen as chief transmitter of cultural characteristics, have dominated attempts to deal with the issue of Vietnamese American scholastic achievement in particular. The most influential studies that have argued for a cultural explanation of Vietnamese academic success have been an article in *Scientific American* by Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy (1992), and the book, *The Boat People and Achievement in America* (1989), by the same authors. Caplan, Whitmore, and Choy argue that "... cultural values are as important to successful adaptation as gravity is to physics" (Caplan, Whitmore and Choy, 1989: 156). Students of some groups succeed, in this view, because their parents pass on cultural values that encourage achievement.

Ritter and Dornbusch (1989), however, after studying family influences on scholastic performance among Asian children, conclude "something associated with being Asian is having an impact on school performance independent of the family process variables that may work so

well in predicting performance among whites" (p. 70). One of the difficulties with looking at Asian families as ultimate sources of superior performance is that many of the characteristics that tend to be found in Asian American families in general and in Vietnamese American families in particular, such as high levels of parental authoritarianism, and low levels of expectation and encouragement of mature and independent behavior among children, are usually predictors of low achievement (Sue and Okazaki, 1990: 916).

To address the difficulties raised by both the genetic and cultural explanations, Sue and Okazaki (1990) put forward the theory of "relative functionalism." According to this theory, Asian success is to be explained by blocked mobility: as a result of barriers to upward mobility by other means, such as social networks, Asians tend to focus on education. While perceptions of blocked mobility may influence the life choices of Asians, however, this would not account for trends in other groups that also experience blocked mobility.

There is, however, as I have suggested above, another theoretical possibility, one that would attribute differences in ethnic characteristics to differences in patterns of relationships within ethnic communities, rather than to individual-level characteristics of group members. This is the theoretical possibility raised by James Coleman's concept of "social capital." Social capital may be defined as the existence of a system of relationships that promotes advantageous outcomes for participants in the system (Coleman, 1989; Coleman, 1990(a): 300-302). From a social capital perspective, the "dense set of associations" (Coleman, 1990: 316) provided by the ethnic community, and the formal organizations that arise from this set, offer a system of supports and constraints that promote advantageous action. If the source of Vietnamese academic achievement is the ethnic community, rather than the individual family, we should expect that success of group members is related to degree of involvement with the ethnic group, rather than to

individual family characteristics. This would be a "social relations" theory of academic achievement.

A social relations theory would find support in work on the determinants of academic achievement in general. The famous Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) found that students' achievement was affected least by facilities and curriculum within schools and most by the social environment of schools, in the form of socioeconomic backgrounds of fellow students. Other researchers have consistently found that "input factors", the characteristics that students bring to schools, have more impact on academic achievement than do "process factors", the contributions made by school policies, methods, and resources (Neisser, 1986; Selden, 1990). Caldas (1993) found that among Louisiana elementary and secondary students, process factors accounted for only tiny portions of the total variance among schools in academic achievement measured by achievement tests, while race and socioeconomic status were powerful predictors.

The social resources that students bring with them to schools, in other words, are more important in determining performance than anything that schools do. Coleman has tended to identify these social resources with individual families, pointing out that families provide young people with unequal advantages in schools through intangible supports, such as family stability and expectations for future achievement, as well as through such material supports as income and position (Coleman, 1990: 55-57). But the point that students are influenced primarily by the social backgrounds of *fellow* students, and not simply by their own social backgrounds, suggests that we may be defining "input factors" too narrowly if we restrict them to social resources provided by students own families. The wider social environment that surrounds individuals and surrounds families provides young people with a system of social ties.

To conceive of an ethnic group as a system of social ties is to see an ethnic group as a an environment and therefore as an "input factor,"

an independent influence on school achievement. Explaining the effect of ethnicity on scholastic performance would require looking, first, at the pattern of social ties provided by the ethnic group, at the supports that these ties provide to encourage some kinds of behaviors and the constraints that they provide to discourage others. Second, it would require looking at how "locked in" to this system of social ties the young people within an ethnic group are. The fewer the ties young people have to their own group and the more the ties they have to the outside, the less they would be likely to perform according to the demands of the group.

It seems fairly clear how this explanation of the educational performance of young people in an immigrant group can be connected to the segmented assimilation argument. If the social environment surrounding the ethnic group is rich in social resources, then the resources provided by the group become correspondingly less important. The group may still be a positive influence: arguably, for example, when Japanese professionals in the United States enroll their children in weekend or after-after-school Japanese school, the children benefit both from privileged socioeconomic contacts in the dominant American society and from the expectations and opportunities for intellectual development obtained in the after-school program. But when an immigrant group finds itself in a relatively limited socioeconomic setting in which the problems of the surrounding social environment outweigh the resources, then a tightly interlinked, cooperative ethnic community becomes a crucial source of social capital for its young people and the extent to which young people are integrated into that community becomes a major determinant of how well the young people will do in school.

A Preliminary Examination of Family and Income as Influences on Vietnamese Academic Performance: The Evidence of Dropout Rates

The statistics on white, black, and Vietnamese dropout rates, combined with those on Vietnamese American family structure that we have seen above, raise the question of to what extent this academic

performance may be attributed to individual family characteristics. If this were the case, Vietnamese communities might still play an important role, by providing support to the families within them, but there would be no direct relationship between community involvement and adolescent scholastic performance, since performance would simply be due to more effective structures of individual families. To examine this possibility, it is helpful to see if the academic achievement of Vietnamese teenagers, operationalized in a minimal way as simply not dropping out of school, may be explained by individual family or personal characteristics. To do this, I will look at relevant variables taken from the 5% Public Use Microsample of the U.S. Census to see what kinds of explanations we can find for differences in the two main racial groups of the United States, blacks and whites, and then see if the same variables that explain black and white differences may also be used to explain differences in dropout rates between U.S. blacks and Vietnamese and between U.S. whites and Vietnamese.

Table 4.1 presents selected characteristics of white, black, and Vietnamese American non-householders aged 16 through 19, taken from the 5% PUMS. Since it is not possible to use Census data to examine parental or guardian characteristics of young people who have left home and set up their own households, I have selected only those not listed as householders or as spouses of householders. This has resulted in the proportions of high school dropouts, for all three groups, being slightly lower than those found in the full Census, but the trend remains the same: only 5.5% of Vietnamese aged 16-19 who are not householders are neither in school nor high school graduates, compared to 8.9% of white non-householders of the same age and 11.2% of black non-householders of the same age.

All three groups show low rates of marriage. This is undoubtedly due in part to the tendency to leave home after marriage. Statistics on fertility show drastic differences between black females in their late

Table 4.1. Selected Characteristics of U.S. White, Black, and Vietnamese Non-Householders Aged 16 through 19.

	Whites	Blacks	Viet.
% not in school, not high school graduates	8.9	11.2	5.5
% married or formerly married	1.6	1.4	0.9
% of females who have had at least one child	4.1	17.0	2.4
% in married couple families	79.7	46.1	72.7
% living in household in which a parent is head	88.0	82.7	87.6
% living in a household in which a step-parent is head	8.2	5.4	3.1
% living in a household in which a grandparent is head	2.6	9.7	1.6
% living in a household in which a sibling is head	1.3	2.1	7.6
% living with a divorced parent	11.8	16.3	5.2
% living with a parent who has never married	0.4	11.3	1.2
Mean number of persons per family	4.2	4.7	5.7
Median family income	$43,000	$24,000	$31,101
Median income of household head	$25,000	$12,000	$15,367

(Table con'd)

	Whites	Blacks	Viet.
Mean years of education of father	10.7	9.5	9.2
Mean years of education of mother	10.4	9.7	7.8
Mean age of father	45.2	43.6	48.3
Mean age of mother	43.0	42.2	45.0
% US born	95.3	95.4	3.5
% Post-1980 immigrants	2.4	2.8	37.2
% Speak English very well	96.5	97.8	57.9
N	15011	3808	2216

Source: U. S. Census of Population and Housing, 5% Public Use Microdata Sample, 1990

teens and females of the other two groups. 17% of black teenaged women still living at home have had at least one child, compared to 4.1% of white teenaged women and only 2.4% of Vietnamese teenaged women.

With regard to the parental composition of the household, Vietnamese teenagers resemble whites teenagers much more than they resemble black teenagers. 79.7% of the whites and 72.7% of the Vietnamese live in married couple households, compared to only 46.1% of black teenagers. Black teenagers are also slightly more likely than Vietnamese or whites to live in households in which someone other than a biological parent is head, although whites are the most likely to live in households in which a step-parent is head. Living in households in which a grandparent is head is much more common for black American teenagers (9.7%) than for either white teenagers (2.6%) or Vietnamese teenagers (1.6%). Vietnamese, however, are the most likely to live in households in which siblings are head of household, probably as a result of the process of immigration for refugees, which often results in parents or other family members being left behind in Vietnam.

Even though the Vietnamese in this PUMS sample have slightly lower rates of living in two-parent families than do the whites, this does not appear to be due to divorce, since Vietnamese teenagers are the least likely of the three groups to be found living with a divorced parent. This could, of course, simply imply high rates of remarriage on the part of Vietnamese parents, but it seems more plausible to attribute the slightly lower rates of two-parent families among the Vietnamese to the hardships of the refugee process. Not only do black teenagers have the highest rate of living with divorced parents (16.3%), they also have the highest rate of living with parents who have never been married (11.3%, compared to 0.4% for white teenagers and 1.2% for Vietnamese teenagers).

Given the general similarity between white American teenagers and Vietnamese American teenagers in parental composition of the household, it might be plausible to argue that both of these groups have lower

dropout rates than do black Americans because neither have undergone the historical experiences that have affected black families, and that the shattered families of the black American teenagers are the immediate cause of their somewhat higher dropout rates. This would still not explain why Vietnamese have lower dropout rates than whites, but it would at least suggest that family structure is one source of Vietnamese academic achievement.

The family incomes of the three groups also differ. White Americans between the ages of 16 and 19 live in families with the highest median income ($43,000) and black Americans in this age group live in families with the lowest median income ($24,000). The Vietnamese have a median income between these two ($31,101). Part of the income difference between black American families and Vietnamese American might be attributed to the larger families, with greater numbers of workers, of Vietnamese families in the U.S. However, even when we look only at individual incomes of heads of households we see a gap between Vietnamese heads of households, who have a median income of $15,367, and black heads of households, who have a median income of $12,000. These differences suggest another possible explanation for the dropout rates of the two groups: the Vietnamese have lower dropout rates than black Americans because Vietnamese Americans enjoy a slightly more privileged economic situation. Again, however, this would not account for differences between Vietnamese and white Americans, since the Vietnamese are at a definite disadvantage to white Americans in income.

This table also tells us that Vietnamese American teenagers have less educated and older parents than either of the two primary American racial groups. Educations of the fathers of Vietnamese teenagers were similar to those of black teenagers: 9.2 years and 9.5 years respectively, compared to 10.7 years for white teenagers. Vietnamese mothers of teenagers were less well-prepared educationally than Vietnamese fathers and they were less well-prepared than mothers of white

or black teenagers, since Vietnamese mothers averaged only 7.8 years of schooling. On this note, it must be kept in mind, however, that years of education may be a somewhat misleading indicator of human capital for the Vietnamese, many of whom acquired their educations in a foreign setting.

The fathers and the mothers of the Vietnamese are older than those of the other two groups: Vietnamese fathers, on the average, are about five years older than black fathers and about three years older than white fathers. Vietnamese mothers are about three years older than black mothers and about two years older than white mothers. Thus, it is possible to suggest that the greater maturity of Vietnamese parents could have some influence on lower the high school dropout rates of their children.

In one respect, the Vietnamese are clearly at an apparent disadvantage compared to the major racial groups in the United States: the former are much more recent arrivals and have much more limited skills in English. Only 3.5 % of Vietnamese between the ages of 16 and 19 in 1990 were born in the United States, compared to over 95% of both black and white Americans. More than one-third of the Vietnamese in this age group arrived in the U.S. after 1980. Only about 58% of them could speak English very well, compared to almost all of the two primary American racial groups.

When we say that Vietnamese students have low dropout rates we mean, of course, that their rates are low relative to those of the major groups in our society, which we take as reference points. A preliminary investigation of why Vietnamese students are less likely to drop out of school than the two major groups in American society can begin by focusing on two expected major influences on scholastic success: family structure and income.

Table 4.2 compares high school dropout rates for Vietnamese Americans aged 16 to 19 in the 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample with a

Table 4.2. Crosstabulation of Black American and Vietnamese American Dropout Rates, Controlling for Family Structure.

Non-married couple families (N)	12.0 (1478)	5.0 (48)
Married couple Families (N)	7.3 (735)	4.4 (111)

χ^2 for non-married couple families = 30.95, $p < .01$
χ^2 for married couple families = 26.00, $p < .01$

Table 4.3. Crosstabulation of Black American and Vietnamese American Dropout Rates, Controlling for Household Income.

Under $25,000	11.7 (1462)	5.7 (80)
$25,000-$50,000	8.4 (578)	4.8 (51)
$50,000-$75,000	5.8 (130)	3.2 (17)
Over 75,000	5.5 (43)	3.2 (11)

χ^2 for under $25,000 = 46.23, $p < .01$
χ^2 for $25,000 to $50,000 = 16.73, $p < .01$
χ^2 for $50,000 to $75,000 = 5.66, $p < .05$
χ^2 for over $75,000 = 2.90, $p = .09$

10% random subsample of Black Americans aged 16 to 19 in the 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample. Here I control for whether or not these teenagers live in a married couple family. Looking at the first row, we see that Vietnamese American teenagers in 1990 who were not living in married couple families had lower dropout rates, that is, rates of being neither enrolled in school nor a high school graduate than did Black American teenagers. When we look at the comparison of Vietnamese American and Black American teenagers in married couple families, we see that the Vietnamese still have lower dropout rates, but the difference between the two groups has lessened.

If more intact families were a chief reason that the Vietnamese have lower dropout rates than the major American minority group, we would expect to see the differences between the two groups disappear, or at least be greatly lessened, when we control for family structure. Instead, what we see is that differences remain, but they are more pronounced for the category that we might see as might see as a disadvantage, in the sense that it is associated with higher rates of non-completion of school, that is, the category of not living in a two-parent family.

When we look at income categories, in Table 4.3, we see something very similar happening. The greatest difference in dropout rates between Black American and Vietnamese American teenagers is in the lowest category. As household income increases, the "benefits" of being Vietnamese appear to decrease.

When we look at differences between a 10% random subsample of White American teenagers aged 16 to 19 and Vietnamese American teenagers, in Table 4.4, we see very much the same pattern. The Vietnamese are less likely to be dropouts than Whites, whether or not they live in married couple families. But, again, the difference is more pronounced for the non-married couple families. Income shows much the same pattern. Once more, as household income increases, shown in Table 4.5, the differences

Table 4.4. Crosstabulation of White American and Vietnamese American Dropout Rates, Controlling for Family Structure.

Non-married couple families (N)	10.2 (1459)	5.0 (48)
Married couple Families (N)	5.9 (3365)	4.4 (111)

χ^2 for non-married couple families = 18.36, $p < .01$
χ^2 for married couple families = 8.91, $p < .01$

Table 4.5. Crosstabulation of White American and Vietnamese American Dropout Rates, Controlling for Household Income.

Under $25,000	10.5 (1749)	5.7 (80)
$25,000-$50,000	6.7 (1828)	4.8 (51)
$50,000-$75,000	4.9 (822)	3.2 (17)
Over $75,000	3.9 (425)	3.2 (11)

χ^2 for under $25,000 = 32.66, $p < .01$
χ^2 for $25,000-$50,000 = 6.00 $p < .05$
χ^2 for $50,000-$75,000 = 3.23, $p = .07$
χ^2 for = over $75,000 = .50, $p = .45$

between Vietnamese and the majority group decrease. Neither family structure nor income explains why the Vietnamese have lower dropout rates than most Americans. There is something about being Vietnamese that leads to staying in school. This advantage of being Vietnamese, this evidence suggests, is most pronounced when young people are otherwise disadvantaged. The most intelligible explanation of this would be that there is something about being Vietnamese that acts as a buffer against the effects of family and income situations that are associated, among other American teenagers, with quitting school.

These findings, I think, are consistent with the argument that I am advancing here. Social relations among Vietnamese Americans help to direct and channel these young people into forms of behavior likely to lead to upward mobility. These social relations take on particular importance when the young people find themselves in situations where they lack other advantages, in low income categories or in disadvantaged segments of American society. While this is a plausible explanation of these findings, it will need more substantiation.

I have described the social setting of Vietnamese Americans in general, and then I have described in much greater detail a particular Vietnamese American social setting in New Orleans East. Now, having offered some broad observations and evidence on Vietnamese American students, I will proceed to offer a description of the Vietnamese American students in this social setting.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have begun to focus on the apparent academic success of Vietnamese American students. I have noted that this success has been observed by other researchers and that there is evidence for it in U.S. Census data, as well as in results from standardized tests. I have described some theoretical explanations for this success and argued that the best explanation might be that the kinds of social relations that exist within the Vietnamese American communities described earlier

promote outcomes likely to lead to upward mobility. Following the segmented assimilation argument, I have maintained that these kinds of social relations take on especial importance when students find themselves in otherwise disadvantaged situations. A preliminary examination of the influences of family structure and income on dropout rates has provided some support for this position.

Chapter 5. The Students of Versailles Village

Vietnamese Students in the Schools

Despite the strong Catholic identity of this neighborhood, over 90% of its students are public school students. This is probably mostly a result of the relatively high cost of education at Catholic schools. Although, as we have seen, there is currently a concerted effort on the part of community leaders to get neighborhood students into the top magnet schools, the majority still attend two public schools, as I have noted above. The description of the school environment that I offer here is based primarily on fieldwork in these schools. The largest part of this fieldwork took the form of a semester spent as a substitute teacher at Marion Abramson high school, where I taught both honors and non-honors classes. While I was at Abramson, I sat in on meetings of Abramson's Asian Club, which met every Tuesday after school. I was also able to attend school functions, such as the *Tet* (Vietnamese New Year) celebration at Sarah T. Reed and to observe some classes and interview teachers at Reed. I also spent a day at McMain Magnet School, which is attended by a few Vietnamese students, sitting in on all the classes of one young Vietnamese man and observing his interactions with his fellow students and talking, between classes, with all of his teachers.

Sarah T. Reed, with approximately 300 Vietnamese students in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades has the largest concentration of Vietnamese high school students of any high school in the city of New Orleans. Reed is a relatively new school, built in the mid 1970s as a junior high school and converted to a senior high in the late 1980s. In appearance, it retains much of its newness, particularly from the outside. It also has good facilities, with an excellent library, a spacious auditorium, and few of the signs of physical deterioration that blight some of the schools that serve the central city of New Orleans.

The former principal of Sarah T. Reed described the student population as a mixture of Vietnamese, African American young people from

modest working class families, and African American young people from poor families (among the latter are both families from the Section 8 housing in Versailles Arms and other government-subsidized private housing and families who live in public housing developments). The roughly 300 Vietnamese students make up about 20% of the school's total population of about 1500 students and African Americans make up about 77%. The remaining 3% are whites and Hispanics.

The newness and availability of good physical facilities do not suffice to create academic excellence within Reed's student population. The results of the California Achievement Test given in 1992 showed that only 13 percent of the students in this school equaled or exceeded the 50th percentile of the California Achievement Test, while over half (53%) of them equaled or fell below the 25th percentile (New Orleans School Board, 1993).

Reed is plagued by many of the problems of schools that serve low-income populations. One social worker from the Vietnamese community who visited the school was appalled by what he found: "It was like a jungle. The students were all walking down the halls, pushing and yelling at each other. There was a guard there, but he didn't say anything to make them behave, he just stood there. I feel sorry for our kids that have to go to schools like this" (Minh Pham, personal communication, 2/16/95).

Reed has had a constant turnover in principals: during the three years that I have studied the students of this neighborhood, there have been three different principals. One teacher, who did not wish to be named, said that this was because no principal had been able to keep order in the school. Although teachers and those who are in contact with the school estimate that there are about thirty "troublemakers" among the Vietnamese students at Reed, the Vietnamese are widely seen as the school's shining lights. As a physical education and science teacher at the neighborhood school told me, "those Vietnamese kids are the ones that keep me coming here each morning. They really care and work hard."

Marion Abramson Senior High, on the fringes of the Vietnamese settlement in eastern New Orleans, enjoys a somewhat better situation than Reed. It contains what is referred to as a "magnet component." This means that 10% of the students in the school are in the honors program, composed of classes that follow a special, challenging curriculum. Students from outside the boundaries of the school district may enter the honors program, but they must have a "B" average or better in their previous school, and they must pass an entry test that covers all subjects.

Roughly 80% of the students in the honors program are Vietnamese and about 90% of the Vietnamese students who attend the school on the outer edge of the Vietnamese community are in the honors program. As we have seen, trying to get young people into magnet programs is a conscious mobility strategy of the Vietnamese people in this area, and attendance at Abramson is usually seen as the first step upward.

Most of my own field work was conducted at Abramson, since it was difficult to get cooperation from the administration at Reed. One of the teachers candidly explained to me that the administration was leery of outsiders, especially outsiders that might report unfavorably on the school. "There's so much trouble here already that they just want to cover their ass (sic)," she said.

The halls of both Abramson and Reed are patrolled by armed guards at all times of the school day. During the time that I taught at Abramson, I witnessed at least six fights in the halls, which were broken up by guards and by male teachers. The fighters were both males and females (males would fight with males, females with females). All of the fighters were non-Vietnamese, but I have been informed that fights among Vietnamese students do occur. Active aggression rarely seems to cross racial boundaries.

I taught both honors and non-honors students. Most of the students in the honors classes were Vietnamese, but there were also a number of

African Americans among the honors students. The honors students tended to cluster in the class according to both race and sex. The Vietnamese students showed a definite tendency to work together with those sitting around them, unless I explicitly asked them to work alone. The non-Vietnamese honors students would generally work by themselves on assignments. While students of both racial groups in honors classes would do their work, the Vietnamese would generally talk among themselves (mainly in English, lapsing occasionally into Vietnamese), about the assignment and about other subjects, and the African American students would work quietly and intently. The African American honors students (most of whom were female) approached their schoolwork with a greater display of seriousness; the Vietnamese would often joke and laugh with each other as they worked on their assignments. Despite these differences in style, members of both racial groups did finish their assignments.

Although young people of the two racial groups generally sat apart from each other, they communicated readily and seemed to maintain extremely amiable relations. Although friendship cliques were obviously constructed along racial lines, and the students would generally group themselves according to race in their seating arrangements, students of the two racial groups would converse on entering and leaving classrooms, and I noted several occasions on which members of the two racial groups would loan each other paper, pencils, or pens.

On the issue of classroom relations between the Vietnamese and the majority racial group in Abramson, I noted an incident one afternoon in an Asian Club meeting that seemed to be revealing. The Club was meeting to discuss sales of *cha gio* (Vietnamese egg rolls) in school in order to finance club activities. One male African American student, who had just finished a class, remained in the room where the meeting was to be held immediately after school. As the members of the Asian Club took their seats in the room, a Vietnamese girl put her hand on the shoulder of the

African American student and began singing the song "One of These Things Just Doesn't Belong." It was clear that she was joking, and it was clear that the young man in question took the joke in good humor, felt comfortable with his Asian classmates, and was in no hurry to get up and leave the room. However, it was also clear that race was an implicitly recognized and accepted boundary.

There were only two Vietnamese students in the non-honors classes that I taught at Abramson. These students sat together, but otherwise did not display any noticeable signs of social distance from their classmates. Teaching the non-honors classes was a good deal more challenging than the honors. Keeping order was always difficult. Some students would attempt to get up and walk out of class in the middle of the period. When I would ask the students to do assignments that had been left behind by their teachers most would simply ignore me. When I asked them why they were not doing their work, some of the answers I received were: "I ain't doin' nothin'," "get the fuck out of here," and "try and make me, faggot."

Outside of the Vietnamese-dominated honors classes, in other words, the peer environment of the school presented an extremely poor learning environment. On one occasion, a young African American woman remained after class to complain to me about her difficulties in learning: "I want to learn and make something of myself," she told me, "but it's so hard here with all of the kids who don't do anything but act up and make noise. And they make fun of you if you do what you're supposed to."

During lunch period one day, I heard music coming from a classroom next to the one in which I had been teaching and I knocked on the door. A math and computer teacher with whom I had often talked opened the door. I asked him why he was eating his lunch in his room. He explained that he had turned some students in to the principal for selling marijuana outside of his classroom window and that it was therefore not safe for him to walk alone through the halls of the school.

Vietnamese Students in the Community: "Respect" as Affirmation of Ethnic Relations

"Respect" was a theme that emerged in almost every discussion with members of the community about "Americanized" youth, whether the discussion took the form of a formal interview or an informal conversation. The meaning of the concept of respect, as used by members of the community, may be understood by examining the ways in which they use the word. The word "respect" was used in the following contexts: (a) respect for elders, (b) respect for authority, (c) and respect for peers and self. I will look at the meanings of each of these forms of respect below.

(a) Respect for elders. All of the adults mentioned a lack of respect for elders when I asked them to describe an "Americanized" Vietnamese young person, and most of the "non-Americanized" young people cited this as a characteristic of their peers. When asked how respect, or lack of respect, for elders is conveyed, greetings were most commonly mentioned. One man of about 50 years of age reported:

> When they (young people) pass me on the street or see me in a shop, they should say "*Chao Ong*" (roughly, "Good Day, Sir"). Most of these teenagers we're talking about act like I'm not there.

The failure to recognize an elder is a failure to acknowledge social identities; it is treating an elder not as "a Vietnamese elder" but simply as an anonymous human. This failure is especially serious when it takes place in an intimate environment, the home. Another middle-aged man, a father of six children, said:

> Sometimes my children bring home friends from school. When they come into my house, they must come and talk to me first to be polite. When they just walk by, I do not like it, and I tell my children not to bring those friends to my house.

Here we see that not acknowledging elder-youth relations can be a cause for ostracism. The youth tend to agree with the definitions of social identity of their elders, but they are less emphatic about the enforcement. The response of a 17 year old high school senior may be

taken as representative of attitudes of community young people toward their parents' ideas:

> Well, my parents really don't like it when I have friends over that don't go and talk to them and stuff. And most of my friends are pretty polite because my parents know their parents. But I don't worry about the other kids. We get along O.K. at school.

The response of one "Americanized youth," a 16 year old recent high school dropout, makes clear that not expressing the expected forms of respect for an elder really is indicative of non-participation in a pattern of social relations:

> A lot of times, I don't know what these older Vietnamese people want out of me. I mean, who are they to me? They got their lives and I got mine.

(b) Respect for authority. Respect for authority is closely related to respect for elders, since age or being a parent are sources of authority. However, it is not simply age that establishes authority, but the social persona of the individual within the web of social relations. In keeping with the centrality of the religious institution in this community, the pastor receives a great deal of respect, as recognition of his key position in the system of ethnic interactions. As a fifteen year old sophomore explained:

> Of course we respect our pastor. We like him, too, but that doesn't have anything to do with it. It's who he is and who we are that's the important thing.

Nash (1992) also found that respect for persons in positions of authority was a defining characteristic of the Vietnamese social order: "Vietnamese children, when asked to draw pictures of people they admire, drew their parents, priests, policemen, and community leaders. A similar, American group of children initially refused my request, saying it was 'silly.' When they finally did respond to the request, they drew rock stars and rich socialites" (p. 43). Respect, as we see it here, is more than just a "value." It is a concrete expression of the forms of behavior between individuals holding different places. The patterns of social organization they have carried with them from Vietnam to the

United States are implicit in the Vietnamese language. Vietnamese uses "status pronouns" that establish the relative positions of the speaker and the person addressed (Bankston, forthcoming; Bulteau, 1953). First person, second person, and third person pronouns vary according to these social positions. Thus, the word *ong*, noted above, is both a title (*Ong* Carl - Mr. Carl; *Ong Mei* - "Mr. American," or "the American gentleman") and a second and third person pronoun used to indicate respect, formality, and a degree of unfamiliarity.

For our present purposes, the word *thay* ("teacher") is one of the most important status pronouns. As a noun this word is usually used as part of a compound (*thay giao* or *thay hoc* - teacher) and it means both "teacher" and "master" (the latter has the sense of both "schoolmaster" and "master of a servant"). Used alone, however, it is most often a pronoun that conveys the respect a student must show to a male teacher. It may be taken as an aspect of traditional Vietnamese gender relations and of the old association of teaching with masculinity that in the feminine equivalent of *thay giao, co giao*, the word *co* refers simply to an unmarried woman.

Within context of American society, the expected use of this pronominal *thay* has become a symbolic delineation of those inside the ethnic system of relations and those outside this system. One male Vietnamese American public school teacher, an individual apparently at home in American society, explained to me:

> When Vietnamese kids call me "you" in English or in a mixture of Vietnamese and English, it sounds rough to my ears. It makes me feel like they've fallen away from our way of thinking about things. Some things just can't be translated into English and the respect in our word "thay" is one of those things.

Addressing someone in a position of authority in a particular way is not just a "value", in the sense of a collectively held idea about desirable and undesirable behavior, it is an action that marks one's position in a set of social relations. It is not immediately relevant which aspects of these social relations have been transplanted without

change from Vietnam to America and which aspects have developed in the process of resettlement. As an immigrant minority, the Vietnamese of New Orleans East and elsewhere in the United see the authority relationships as the defining what it means to be "Vietnamese" and therefore those who take part in these relationships enter into the ethnic group as a whole and are controlled by the group and draw on the group's resources.

(c) Respect for peers and self. I was a little surprised when I asked a young man, an individual who had recently graduated at the top of his class and received a college scholarship, to tell me what he meant when he referred to some of his peers as "Americanized".

> They are people who have no respect for their friends and no respect for themselves.

The Vietnamese word *kinh* which is usually translated as "to respect" or "to defer (to someone)" may, I believe, be more accurately rendered as "to treat someone in a polite and appropriate manner." This is the sense in which I believe this young man was using the word "respect." When I asked him to tell me what he meant by "respect for friends," he explained:

> It's in the way that they act. They're loud when they talk to their friends and act in ways that look rude. I guess the best way that I can explain it is that they don't look like they think the people around them are important.

It is the informality of those who are not full participants in the system of ethnic relations that makes these individuals appear not to "respect" their fellows. Another man, an adult of about 30 years of age, when asked to distinguish between Vietnamese teenagers that he would consider to be "good kids" and those that he would consider to be "bad kids," also touched on this note of informality in personal deportment:

> The bad ones are the ones that hang out on Alcee Fortier (one of the main streets in the neighborhood). Even though they're in public, you can see them just sitting down on the sidewalk, drinking and smoking cigarettes.

"Respect" is a social concept, an expression of acceptance of positions. Respect for others, i.e. recognition of others within an

established set of social positions is closely connected to respect for self, the acceptance of one's own place within this set of social positions. The same young man who brought up the concept of respect in talking about peers, told me,

> Some of the Vietnamese kids who were brought up in this country act like they don't respect themselves ... They are messy in the way that they dress and the way that they behave. If they don't respect themselves they can't respect other people. They don't realize that they are Vietnamese and have to act in ways that are appropriate for Vietnamese people.

"Respect" in these different senses may be seen as an affirmation of ethnic social relations. Young people are seen as "Vietnamese" to the extent to which they recognize, accept, and place themselves in a set of roles (authority roles, age and family roles, peer roles) that are explicitly seen as variations of ethnic identities. Thus, these young people are defining themselves in terms of a social network that is not only small and highly interconnected, but has definite arrangement of social positions. respect for Not respect for property, even though delinquent youth often engage in activities that pose threats to private property, but respect for persons.

Empirical Data on the Vietnamese in the School Environment: Results of the Graduation Exit Examination

In addition to these observations on the school environment, obtained through fieldwork and interviews, there is also an objective source of information on Vietnamese students in Reed and Abramson. Every year, the Louisiana Department of Education administers an exit examination to 10th and 11th graders in all Louisiana public schools. Those in the 10th grade are normally tested in language, mathematics, and written composition. Those in the 11th grade were tested in science and social studies. Students must receive passing grades in all subjects in order to be allowed to graduate from school. Through 1990, these examinations also contained some demographic information about each student be examined. Students taking the test were required to give the occupational levels of their mothers and their fathers and the

educational levels of their mothers and their fathers. These questions were dropped after this year, for reasons that are not clear, although the exam results continue to report race, sex, free lunch status, and a few other variables.

Because the 1990 data is the most recent relatively rich source of information to be produced by the exit examinations, I have chosen to rely on the 1990 GEE in order to provide some preliminary examination of the position of Vietnamese students in the local schools and of their performance in these schools. Racial categories in the GEE data include "Black", "White", and "Asian". The category "Asian" may be taken as virtually synonymous with "Vietnamese" for these two schools. Although this involves lumping a few Laotians and Cambodians in with the Vietnamese, the numbers of these, as discussed above, are too small to affect the results.

It will be noted in this discussion that students in the schools in question generally tend to score below the mean for Orleans Parish. Orleans Parish students, in turn, are below the level of Louisiana students in general. In the State of Louisiana in 1990, 86% of all students attained the state's minimum performance standard on the language arts section, 82% attained the minimum standard on the mathematics section, 87% attained the minimum standard on the science section, 89% attained the minimum standard on the social studies section, and 91% attained the minimum standard on the written composition section. In Orleans Parish in that same year, only 72% attained the minimum standard in language arts, 64% in mathematics, 75% in science, 79% in social studies, and 82% in written composition (Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Research and Development, 1992).

As we will see, then, not only do Vietnamese students, for the most part, live in a poor neighborhood in a poor parish in a comparatively poor state, they also attend schools with lower levels of student attainment than is generally found in their parish, in which, in turn,

students show lower levels of attainment than elsewhere in Louisiana, a state not usually noted for the excellence of its schools. If the accomplishments of Vietnamese students cannot be attributed to socioeconomic resources of their individual families, then, it would also seem difficult to ascribe these accomplishments to advantages in the school environment.

Table 5.1 gives the comparative performance of the three racial groups in the two high schools on the five skill areas included in the test. The language, science, mathematics, and social studies portions of the test are all multiple-choice in nature, much like the SAT tests that students take to enter universities or the GRE tests that students take to enter graduate school. The writing composition part of the test is different in character, since it requires test-takers to compose a short piece of writing on an assigned subject. The results I have obtained from the Louisiana Department of Education do not include students classified as "Limited English Proficiency" by the state. This is the reason we see a smaller number of Vietnamese test-takers at Reed than we might otherwise expect, as Vietnamese Limited English Proficiency students were concentrated at Reed.

Vietnamese students tended to score above the majority population at both of these schools, and also generally above the mean for all of Orleans Parish. The tiny number of white students at Reed scored surprisingly well, but this may be only a fluke, since there are so few of them (N=12). At Abramson, where white students could be found in somewhat greater numbers, scores of white students were roughly comparable to those of black students, doing slightly better in language and math, and worse in writing.

Vietnamese (Asian) students at these schools appear to be particularly strong in math. At Reed, Vietnamese students scored more than 9 points higher than the parish mean and about 13 points higher than black students at the same school. At Abramson, which tends to attract

Table 5.1. Mean Graduation Exit Examination Scores of Asian, Black, and White 10th and 11th Graders at Vietnamese-Concentration Schools and Mean Scores of All 10th and 11th Graders Tested in Orleans Parish in 1990.

	Asian	Black	White
Language[a]	1057.45	1053.40	1057.43
(N)	(40)	(267)	(7)
Science[b]	1040.20	1031.05	1043.00
(N)	(30)	(253)	(5)
Math[a]	1057.35	1044.12	1049.00
(N)	(40)	(267)	(7)
Social Studiesb[b]	1040.97	1030.81	1055.60
	(30)	(253)	(5)
Writing[a]	1027.50	923.65	1057.14
(N)	(40)	(267)	(7)
Points above or below parish mean:			
Language	+4.19	+.14	+4.17
Science	-2.28	-11.43	+.52
Math	+9.44	-3.79	+1.09
Social Studies	-2.22	-12.38	+12.41
Writing	+67.37	-36.28	+97.21

[a] Taken in 10th grade.
[b] Taken in 11th grade.

(Table con'd)

	Marion Abramson			Orleans
	Asian	Black	White	Parish
Language[a]	1058.63	1046.04	1046.76	1053.26
(N)	(56)	(283)	(46)	(5215)
Science[b]	1047.67	1038.51	1047.05	1042.48
(N)	(56)	(170)	(40)	(3885)
Math[a]	1064.23	1039.45	1042.48	1047.91
(N)	(56)	(283)	(46)	(5215)
Social Studiesb[b]	1046.46	1038.51	1047.78	1043.19
	(56)	(170)	(40)	(3885)
Writing[a]	1037.45	845.59	826.33	959.92
(N)	(56)	(283)	(46)	(5215)
Points above or below parish mean:				
Language	+5.37	-7.22	-6.50	0
Science	+5.19	-3.97	+4.57	0
Math	+16.34	-8.46	-5.43	0
Social Studies	+3.27	-4.68	+4.59	0
Writing	+77.52	-114.34	-133.60	0

[a] Taken in 10th grade.
[b] Taken in 11th grade.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Accountability

the best Vietnamese students and those that have lived in the United States longer, math scores of Asian students were over 16 points higher than the parish mean and about 25 points higher than the majority black population in the same school.

Asian students in the United States are often stereotyped as having strong math skills. The interesting thing in these results, though, is that Vietnamese students also generally did better than their non-Asian peers in language skills, an area in which even the native-born, growing up in families that spoke English as a second language, did not have any competitive advantage. At Reed, mean language scores of Asians were about 13 points higher than the mean scores of the majority black population, and over five points above the parish mean. At Abramson, mean Asian scores on language items were about 13 points higher than scores of black and white students, and about 5 points higher than mean scores of all students in Orleans Parish.

In science, the Asian students at Reed obtained an average that was slightly below that of the parish mean, but still higher than that of the majority of their non-Asian schoolmates. At Abramson, Vietnamese students scored 5 points higher than the average parish grade, about 11 points higher than black students, and roughly the same as white students. Since some of the science questions involve solving word problems, difficulties with comprehension may account for the relatively modest achievement of Asian students at Reed, where many of the non-Limited English Proficiency students with weaker English skills may be found. Thus language difficulties may appear more in this part of the test, than in the language portion itself, where the primary focus is text-book knowledge of grammar.

A similar explanation may account for the relatively modest scores of Vietnamese students at Reed on the social studies portion of the test. Most of the teachers I have talked to have remarked that social studies is one of the most difficult subjects for Vietnamese students, since

interpretive skills and familiarity with American culture are central to this skill area. Nevertheless, Vietnamese students at Reed still had an average in social studies that was 10 points higher than that of the majority black population. At Abramson, Asian students received approximately the same average as white students, an average 12 points above the majority black students, and 3 points above the average of the parish.

Writing scores showed the greatest variation of the three test areas, perhaps because this is an active skill. It is also, perhaps, the most difficult for those who grow up in a non English-language environment, since it involves actually composing a piece of writing, rather than simply filling in answers. Despite this, Vietnamese students at both Reed and Abramson did better than the majority of other students in their own schools and better than other students throughout the parish.

Before looking at just how much of a difference being Vietnamese makes in exit examination results, it may be helpful to look at the social context of students in the schools. Census data has given us an insight into the social context of the community, and data from the survey I administered in the schools provides more detailed information about variations in characteristics of Vietnamese students. The limited socioeconomic data in the 1990 Graduation Exit Examination can help us obtain some insight into the socioeconomic backgrounds of all students in these schools, and into how Asian students compare to their non-Asian peers. Socioeconomic characteristics of students in the three racial groups in these schools are presented in Table 5.2.

Participation in the federal free lunch program is used as an indicator of socioeconomic status by state education agencies in a number of states, including Louisiana (Caldas, 1993: 206). According to Stephen J. Caldas, former staff psychometrician with the Louisiana State Department of Education, participation in the free lunch program is also

Table 5.2. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Students Taking the 1990 Graduation Exit Examinations at Sarah T. Reed and Marion Abramson High Schools, by Race.

	Sarah T. Reed		
	Asian	Black	White
% with free lunch status	87.0	66.8	41.7
Father's Ed.			
% below H.S.	15.6	15.1	25.0
% college grad	0	16.5	12.5
% don't know	81.3	22.2	12.5
Mother's Ed.			
% below H.S.	18.8	13.5	0
% college grad	0	26.0	12.5
% don't know	75.0	9.4	12.5
Father's job			
% unskilled labor	21.4	8.7	12.5
% manager/ prof.	7.1	13.0	12.5
Mother's job			
% unskilled labor	6.7	8.1	0
% manager/prof.	10.0	27.1	50.0
% homemaker	50.0	19.5	12.5
N[a]	40	267	7

[a] Includes cases missing on some variables

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Accountability

(Table con'd)

	Marion Abramson			Orleans
	Asian	Black	White	Parish
% with free lunch status	81.8	59.4	17.1	64.7
Father's Ed.				
% below H.S.	16.0	3.0	22.9	11.7
% college grad	10.0	19.1	14.3	28.4
% don't know	58.0	24.8	22.9	27.0
Mother's Ed.				
% below H.S.	20.4	11.7	22.9	17.2
% college grad	2.0	24.7	5.7	22.5
% don't know	61.2	12.1	11.4	11.6
Father's job				
% unskilled labor	23.4	4.9	2.9	6.8
% manager/prof.	10.6	21.9	34.3	17.3
Mother's job				
% unskilled labor	18.7	11.5	5.7	9.0
% manager/prof.	6.3	32.2	25.7	26.1
% homemaker	43.8	15.0	22.9	23.4
N[a]	56	283	46	5215

[a] Includes cases missing on some variables

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Accountability

widely used as a proxy for poverty status, since students qualify by virtue of low family incomes (Caldas, personal communication, 11/16/94). Taking free lunch status as an indicator of low socioeconomic level, we see that the vast majority of Vietnamese students at both schools were from families in straitened economic circumstances, and that Asian students were more likely to be poor, at both schools, than were their non-Asian schoolmates. 87% of the Asian students at Reed were on the free lunch program, compared to 67% of black students and 42% of white students (although the number of white students is too tiny for this percentage to be meaningful). At Abramson, 82% of Asian students were on the free lunch program, compared to 60% of black students and only 17% of white students. If we accept the use of free lunch status as an indicator of poverty, then the majority of students at both of these schools, like the majority of high school students in Orleans Parish, came from poor backgrounds, but the Vietnamese were the most likely of all to be poor.

Looking at parental education, about the same percentage of Vietnamese and black students at Reed came from families with fathers who had not completed high school. However, 26% of black students at this school had fathers who were college graduates, while no Asian students had fathers who had finished college. I have also reported percentages of students who did not know their parents' levels of education, since I think this is very revealing. If a young person does not know a parent's educational background, the parent may or may not have a high school education, but it is fairly safe to assume that the parent probably does not have a level of educational attainment much beyond that, and may have very little formal schooling. 81% of the Asian students at Reed in 1990 reported that they did not know how much education their fathers' had. In other words, almost all if the Asian students at this school either did not know their fathers' educational attainment, or knew that their fathers had not finished high school. All

racial categories at Reed showed paternal rates of non-high school completion that were higher than those of the parish in general, and paternal rates of college completion that were lower than those of the parish in general.

As at Reed, about 16% of Asian students at Abramson reported that their fathers had not finished high school. Interestingly, while only 3% of black students at this school reported that their fathers had less than high school educations, 23% of white students gave this answer. A few of the Asian students at Abramson did report that their fathers had finished college, but the percentage was less than that of either black students or white students at the same school. Again, a majority of Asian students did not know their fathers' educational levels. While it cannot be definitively demonstrated that these fathers had relatively low educational levels, it seems a relatively conservative surmise. All racial categories at Abramson showed smaller percentages of fathers who were college graduates than did students throughout Orleans Parish, and both Asians and whites showed higher percentages of fathers without high school educations than did Orleans Parish students in general.

Looking at mothers' educations, again, most Asian students at both schools did not know how much schooling their mothers had completed, and those who did know mostly reported that their mothers had not finished high school. The mothers of Asian students who were able to report on their mothers' educational backgrounds tended to show lower levels of educational attainment than the mothers of non-Asian schoolmates, and lower levels of educational attainment than high school students throughout Orleans Parish.

Parental occupational status is another important indicator of the socioeconomic background of students. Over 21% of the Asian students at Reed reported that their fathers were unskilled laborers and only 7% of them reported that their fathers were in managerial or professional jobs. 9% of black students said that their fathers were unskilled laborers and

13% said their fathers were at the managerial or professional level, indicating that the occupational levels of the fathers of the majority black population at Reed were slightly below those of fathers of Orleans Parish students in general.

The occupational background of fathers of Asian students at Abramson was similar to that of their co-ethnics at Reed, with 23% in unskilled labor and 11% in managerial/professional occupations. Fathers of whites and blacks at Abramson showed somewhat higher occupational levels than did other Orleans Parish students. With regard to mothers' occupations, the most striking fact is the large percentage of Asian mothers who were homemakers.

To summarize these characteristics, this Louisiana Education Department data offers further evidence for the limited socioeconomic backgrounds of Vietnamese students in New Orleans East. Moreover, it shows that in terms of poverty status, parental educational background, and current parental occupational standing, Vietnamese students had fewer resources than the other students in their schools. With this in mind, we may look briefly at how much of a difference being Vietnamese made for students in the two schools of New Orleans East, controlling for family human capital characteristics.

Table 5.3 gives standardized regression coefficients of socioeconomic influences and race on scores on each of the skill areas, and on a composite measure of language, science, math, and social studies. Being Vietnamese appears to make a contribution to test scores in all areas except social studies, which, as noted above, is an area that teachers have noted is especially difficult for Vietnamese students. Even in social studies, however, the sign of the coefficient is positive, indicating that Vietnamese students did at least as well as other students, when we control for the handicaps in their backgrounds. The influence of being Vietnamese on science is quite strong, but statistically insignificant.

Table 5.3. Standardized Regression Coefficients of Socioeconomic Influences and Race on Graduation Exit Examination Scores of 10th and 11th Graders.

	Language (ß)	Science (ß)	Math (ß)	Social Studies (ß)
Asian	.214**	.197	.426**	.069
White	.100	-.042	.110*	.261
Not on free lunch	-.009	.343**	.021	.023
Father's education	-.011	-.014	-.039	-.064
Mother's education	.105	.181	.099	-.030
Father's job	-.047	-.003	-.007	.005
Mother's job	-.066	-.087	-.010	.001
Constant	1054.7	1024.2	1042.3	1040.6
R^2	.052	.123	.159	.078

(Table con'd)

	Writing (ß)	Composite[a] (ß)
Asian	.110*	.337**
White	.004	.108*
Not on free lunch	.028	.017
Father's education	.015	-.016
Mother's education	.006	.061
Father's job	-.034	-.049
Mother's job	.006	-.034
Constant	964.813	297.584
R^2	.012	.111

[a] Excludes writing

Source: Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Accountability

* p < .05
** p < .01

It is in the math and language areas that being Vietnamese has the greatest effect, particularly in math. As mentioned, the language part of the test covers "text-book" knowledge of English, rather than contextual usage, but it is still interesting that a group of adolescents from a non-English speaking community should do much better than others from native-born American families.

In language, math, and writing being Vietnamese has a stronger influence on examination scores than any other variable. In the area of writing, in face, Asian race is the only significant effect. Because language and science and math and social studies (the former being tenth grade test subjects and the latter being 11th grade test subjects) are recorded in the same columns in the data (the score recorded in the column for language actually is language for tenth graders, but it is the science score for eleventh graders), these four skill areas may be easily combined to create a composite that includes both grades and all four areas. In the composite score, we see that being Vietnamese is by far the strongest effect on how well students in these schools do on this test that is given at the end of the high school years to see how well students have mastered the material considered necessary for a high school education.

This discussion of Vietnamese students in the school environment has portrayed the kinds of schools in which these young people find themselves, and how they are adapting to life in these schools. In this last section we have seen that the perceptions of Vietnamese students held by teachers, as the top performers in their schools, may be objectively verified by achievement test results. The question remains as to why these young people have been able to do so much with so little. Before addressing this question, I would like to take a brief look at what the Vietnamese young people in these schools would like to do after school, since we can only understand their present context if we understand the ambitions and aspirations for the future.

Occupational Ambitions of Vietnamese Students

Nash (1992, p. 154) used a reputational method to measure the prestige of occupations in the New Orleans Vietnamese community, asking young people how they felt about different jobs. While this may tell us what kinds of occupations Vietnamese students respect, or feel they ought to respect, it does not necessarily tell us what kinds of jobs are actually valued, if we define the subjective value of a job as the extent to which people actually want to have that job for themselves. While there is a great deal of overlap between the prestige of a position and the extent to which people would actually like to achieve that position, it is quite possible for an occupation to enjoy enormous respect (for example, the occupation of priest in the contemporary United States), while almost no young people will actually regard the occupation as desirable for themselves.

In order to deal with the issue of what jobs are actually valued, in the survey that I administered to Vietnamese high school students living in New Orleans East, I asked a number of questions about how happy they would be in various jobs. Responses ranged from "very happy" to "very unhappy". Table 5.4 presents the percentages of responses to these questions in attempt to reach some preliminary insights into the kinds of jobs that are valued by these young people.

The job of medical doctor was clearly one of the most valued, as well as one of the most prestigious (see Nash, 1993, on the prestige of doctors in this communities) occupations among these adolescents. Very few students reported that they would not be happy to be doctors, and well over half of said that they would be "very happy" to be doctors. It is notable that a higher percentage of females than males said they would be very happy to be doctors.

The occupation of engineer is also a highly valued position, although to a somewhat lesser extent than that of doctor. "Nurse" also received positive answers. Both the job of engineer and that of nurse

Table 5.4. Occupational Preferences of Vietnamese Students of New Orleans East.

	Very Happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
Doctor				
All	57.8	35.1	5.6	1.5
Males	53.3	36.3	8.2	2.2
Females	61.4	34.3	3.3	1.0
Engineer				
All	35.2	44.2	16.2	4.4
Males	44.4	42.4	9.4	3.9
Females	26.9	46.2	22.1	4.8
Nurse				
All	32.3	42.8	17.9	6.9
Males	12.8	44.7	33.0	9.5
Females	49.0	41.0	5.2	4.8
Accountant				
All	20.2	53.6	19.1	7.1
Males	17.7	50.3	21.0	11.0
Females	21.9	56.7	17.6	3.8
Photo-grapher				
All	13.6	57.9	23.3	5.1
Males	12.2	57.2	25.6	5.0
Females	14.8	58.9	21.1	5.3
Mechanic				
All	11.6	28.9	37.6	21.9
Males	21.7	38.9	28.3	11.1
Females	2.9	20.3	45.9	30.9
Teacher				
All	10.5	36.0	33.7	19.8
Males	9.4	30.6	32.8	27.2
Females	11.5	40.9	34.1	13.5
Store Owner				
All	5.6	59.6	25.3	9.5
Males	7.7	52.7	25.8	13.7
Females	3.8	65.4	25.0	5.8
Cashier				
All	4.9	36.8	41.4	17.0
Males	6.6	24.9	48.1	20.4
Females	3.4	47.3	35.7	13.5

(Table con'd)

	Very Happy	Happy	Unhappy	Very Unhappy
Fisherman				
All	2.6	9.1	41.2	47.2
Males	3.3	13.9	36.7	46.1
Females	3.0	4.9	44.9	48.3
Waiter/ Waitress				
All	2.3	26.0	43.7	28.0
Males	0.0	21.1	45.0	33.9
Females	4.3	30.3	42.8	22.6
Homemaker				
All	2.1	27.7	42.4	27.7
Males	1.7	19.0	43.0	36.3
Females	2.5	35.6	42.1	19.8

show some gender bias in answers. Males were more likely to report that they would be happy as engineers and females were more likely to report that they would be happy as nurses. However, a majority of females did report that they would be happy or very happy as engineers and a majority of males reported that they would be happy or very happy as nurses.

Accountants and photographers were also occupations that were appealing to students, but students tended to respond that they would be "happy" rather than "very happy" in these occupations, indicating that these were acceptable rather than very highly rated jobs. Both of these jobs were slightly more appealing to females than to males, in spite of the fact that in the adult Vietnamese community accountants and photographers are overwhelmingly male.

Among the jobs that a majority of all students said would make them unhappy, only the job of teacher would be classified as a "white collar" job. The job of mechanic appeared to be the most popular "blue collar" job, but its popularity was largely limited to males. The job of teacher appeared to be one that was generally seen as acceptable, but not strongly desired. About 36% of students said they would be "happy" with the job of teacher and about 34% said they would be unhappy, with only small numbers of students reporting that they would be very happy or very unhappy with the teacher's job.

Owning a small store is also seen as acceptable, rather than strongly desired. A majority of all students reported that they would be happy with this job, but only very small numbers reported that they would be very happy with it. The job of cashier tends to be seen as acceptable to females, although not strongly desired, and generally unacceptable to males.

Being a fisherman tends to be seen as undesirable, although it is somewhat more acceptable to males than it is to females. Being a waiter or waitress is not seen as a highly desirable job, since no males and only 4.3% of females said they would be very happy with this occupation.

However, the proportion of students who saw being a waiter/waitress as an acceptable job was much greater than the proportion who saw being a fisherman as an acceptable job. The job of homemaker also appeared to be very unpopular, particularly among males. Being a homemaker was acceptable to more females than males, but it is interesting that so few young women in this minority community saw this occupation as desirable, and a majority did not even see it as acceptable.

These results give a rough idea of the ranking of occupations among these young people. To argue that these jobs really represent a hierarchy or scale, though, and not simply variations in tastes, it is important to show that there is a general agreement on the acceptability and desirability of jobs. One way of seeing if there is such an agreement is to examine whether we can treat these jobs as scalable. In other words, those who report that they would be satisfied with the lowest rated job should also tend to report that they would be satisfied with the more highly rated jobs. Table 5.5 suggests that job preferences, while not completely scalable, do provide a roughly scalable hierarchy.

In this table, we see the percentages of those who say that they would be happy or very happy with each occupation who also said that they would be happy or very happy with the other occupations. In column one, row two, 80.8% of those who said they would be happy or very happy with the job of doctor said that they would be happy with the job of engineer. 74.5% of those who said that they would be happy with the job of doctor said that they would be happy with the job of accountant. At the bottom, only 10.7% of those who said they would be happy as doctors also said that they would be happy as fishermen.

The jobs are arranged here in terms of their average scores, shown at the bottom. These scores are computed by adding up the percentages in each row and averaging them. 93.34% of those who say that they would be happy with other occupations say that they would be happy with the job of doctor, 82.98% of those who say they would be happy with other jobs

Table 5.5. Ranking of Acceptability of Jobs Among Vietnamese High School Students of New Orleans East: Crosstabulations of Occupations With Which Students Would Be "Happy" or "Very Happy"[a].

	Doc.	Eng.	Acc.	Nurse	Photo.	Shop Owner
Doc.	100.0	95.5	94.1	96.2	94.6	93.3
Eng.	80.8	100.0	87.9	80.9	82.1	82.4
Acc.	74.5	82.2	100.0	78.2	77.4	78.8
Nurse	77.3	76.7	79.2	100.0	79.7	77.3
Photo.	72.3	74.1	74.7	76.1	100.0	72.5
Shop Owner	65.2	68.0	69.6	67.2	66.3	100.0
Teach.	45.8	50.2	51.6	51.5	48.4	55.3
Cash.	41.6	40.1	46.0	48.5	48.8	49.8
Mech.	40.3	47.6	43.9	38.2	47.0	47.5
Wait.	28.5	27.5	31.1	33.8	37.3	34.5
Home-maker	28.8	27.5	33.6	33.1	35.8	34.9
Fisher	10.7	13.3	12.1	11.3	13.6	14.9

(Table con'd)

	Teach.	Cash.	Mech.	Wait.	Home-maker	Fisher
Doc.	92.3	93.8	93.6	94.5	92.1	86.7
Eng.	85.6	76.5	93.6	77.3	74.6	91.1
Acc.	82.3	82.1	80.9	81.8	85.1	77.8
Nurse	83.4	87.7	71.3	90.0	85.1	73.3
Photo	74.6	85.8	83.4	94.5	87.7	84.4
Shop Owner	77.9	78.4	77.1	80.0	78.1	84.4
Teach.	100.0	63.6	62.4	60.9	58.8	60.0
Cash.	56.9	100.0	52.9	77.3	62.3	53.3
Mech.	54.1	51.2	100.0	49.1	42.1	75.6
Wait.	37.0	52.5	34.4	100.0	53.5	46.7
Home-maker	37.0	43.8	30.6	55.5	100.0	46.7
Fish.	14.9	14.8	21.7	19.1	18.4	100.0

Average percentages of those reporting they would be "happy" or "very happy" with other jobs who report that they would be "happy" or "very happy" with each of the occupations listed:

Doctor:	93.34
Engineer:	82.98
Accountant:	80.10
Nurse:	80.09
Photographer:	80.01
Shop Owner:	73.80
Teacher:	55.32
Cashier:	52.59
Mechanic:	48.78
Waiter/Waitress:	37.89
Homemaker:	37.03
Fisher:	14.98

[a] Column percentages reported

would be happy with the job of engineer, and so on. Within the table, the percentages tend to decrease in value as we move down the columns and they show a general tendency to increase in value as we move across the rows. Those who say they would be happy as fishermen, the lowest rated job, show a greater inclination to express satisfaction with other jobs than do those who say that they would be happy as doctors or engineers. This provides evidence that the ranking of jobs is not just a matter of individual tastes, but shows some broad agreement on the acceptability of different jobs.

Acceptability, of course, is a somewhat different matter from desirability. Table 5.5 gives us a ranking of jobs in terms of what percentages of students would be satisfied with them, but it does not tell us what jobs they really want. In order to determine which jobs the students would really like, I have crosstabulated the "very happy" responses of students. The results are reported in Table 5.6.

These results are, of course very similar to those in the previous table, but they give us a slightly different ranking of jobs. In particular, it is noteworthy that "waiter/waitress" and "homemaker" rank above the job of fisherman in terms of acceptability, but even lower than fishing as jobs that would really make students happy. "Doctor" and "engineer" appear to be the most highly valued jobs among these students.

The most interesting aspect of the jobs that students want or would be content with is how these jobs contrast with those actually being done by their parents and adult neighbors. As we have seen, in the data on adult occupations in the community, professions such as doctors, engineers, nurses, and accountants are among the areas in which the fewest Vietnamese in this neighborhood are employed and in which they are most underrepresented, compared to their neighbors and to other Louisianians. Fishing is one of the jobs ranked lowest by young people, but it is an area that may be estimated to employ at least one out of every ten adults in the community.

Table 5.6. Ranking of Desirability of Jobs Among Vietnamese High School Students of New Orleans East: Crosstabulations of Occupations With Which Students Would Be "Very Happy"[a].

	Doc.	Eng.	Nurse	Acc.	Photo.	Mech.
Doc.	100.0	75.9	84.9	73.4	56.6	62.2
Eng.	45.8	100.0	43.7	74.7	52.8	77.8
Nurse	47.1	40.1	100.0	49.4	43.4	26.7
Acc.	25.6	43.1	31.0	100.0	34.0	37.8
Photo.	13.2	20.4	18.3	22.8	100.0	22.2
Mech.	12.3	25.5	9.5	21.5	18.9	100.0
Teach.	12.8	16.8	15.1	21.5	20.8	20.0
Shop Owner	5.7	10.2	7.1	12.7	13.2	17.8
Cashier	4.4	8.0	6.3	10.1	13.2	15.6
Fisher	3.5	4.4	3.2	6.3	11.3	8.9
Waiter/ Waitress	3.1	3.6	4.0	6.3	13.2	4.4
Homemaker	2.6	2.9	.8	3.8	5.7	4.4

(Table con'd)

	Teach.	Owner	Cash.	Fisher	Wait.	Home-Maker
Doc.	70.7	59.1	52.6	87.0	77.8	75.0
Eng.	56.1	63.6	57.9	60.0	55.6	50.0
Nurse	46.3	40.9	42.1	40.0	55.6	12.5
Acc.	41.5	45.5	42.1	50.0	55.6	37.5
Photo.	26.8	31.8	36.8	60.0	77.8	37.5
Mech.	22.0	36.4	36.8	40.0	22.2	25.0
Teach.	100.0	36.4	36.8	20.0	44.4	25.0
Shop Owner	19.5	100.0	21.1	30.0	22.2	12.5
Cashier	17.1	18.2	100.0	30.0	33.3	12.5
Fisher	4.9	13.6	15.8	100.0	11.1	25.0
Waiter/ Waitress	9.8	9.1	15.8	10.1	100.0	12.5
Homemaker	4.9	4.5	5.3	20.0	11.1	100.0

Average percentages of those reporting they would be "very happy" with other jobs who report that they would be "very happy" with each of the occupations listed:

Doctor:	69.80
Engineer:	58.00
Nurse:	40.37
Accountant:	40.34
Photographer:	33.42
Mechanic:	24.55
Teacher:	24.51
Shop Owner:	15.61
Cashier:	15.34
Fisherman:	9.82
Waiter/Waitress:	8.35
Homemaker:	6.00

[a] Column percentages reported

Chapter Summary

Vietnamese American students in general have shown remarkable adaptation to the American school environment. It is suggested that the explanation for this adaptation might lie in the patterns of social relations within the ethnic group, rather than in innate abilities, cultural values, or in family structures alone. An analysis of census data suggests that family structure is inadequate to explain the high rates of high school completion by Vietnamese Americans.

The school environment which confronts most of the Vietnamese students of New Orleans East is described. This environment, in a manner consistent with the segmented assimilation argument, is one that arguably should inhibit rather than promote academic achievement. Within this environment, the Vietnamese students of this area, like Vietnamese American students in general, have managed to outperform their schoolmates. A description of the roles of Vietnamese American students in the community, focusing on "respect" as an affirmation of community relations, is offered to illustrate how ethnic community relations can control the behavior of young people. Finally, I look at the kinds of aspirations Vietnamese American students develop as a result of growing up in this community, and find a strong orientation toward upward mobility among them.

Chapter 6. Education and Gender Roles Among Vietnamese Students

Several researchers have noted that gender roles among contemporary Vietnamese Americans differ markedly from those believed to have existed in Vietnam (see, for example, Muzny, 1989; Rutledge, 1992; and Kibria, 1993). I have argued above, in the discussion of respect as an affirmation of ethnic relations, that the social organization of Vietnamese Americans that yields supports and constraints to young people may be traced to patterns of relationships brought to the United States from Vietnam. However, the distinctive forms of bounded interactions characteristic of Vietnamese Americans are not simply cookie-cutter models of the Vietnamese heritage. These forms of interactions are also results of adaptations to the demands of a new environment. Perhaps this combination of old and new may be most clearly illustrated by the gender roles found among contemporary Vietnamese teenagers.

Kibria (1993) has remarked that "the basic subordination of women in traditional Vietnamese life is difficult to dispute" (p. 45). Hickey's classic ethnographic study of Vietnamese village life at the end of the 1950s testifies to the second class status of women in Vietnam (Hickey, 1964). Women were expected to marry early, bear children, and serve their husbands. Among non-Catholics, the practice of taking more than one wife was widely accepted.

In terms of education, women were particularly disadvantaged, with rates of illiteracy for women in the village studied by Hickey four times greater than the rates of illiteracy for the village men. "The greater number of illiterates among females," Hickey explains, "reflects the past pattern of providing education only for males while females learned household arts. This has diminished as educational facilities have expanded, and more villagers have come to accept the notion that it also is well to give females a basic formal education" (Hickey, 1964: 51-52). Despite the extension of "a basic formal education" to women, however, the educational opportunities of women remained strictly limited.

Changes in gender roles following migration to the United States may be traced to two sources: necessity and opportunity. As Rutledge (1992) found in interviews with Vietnamese Americans around the United States, the economic situation of Vietnamese American families no longer permits the man to function as sole provider for the household. At the same time, Vietnamese women have encountered "... opportunities to attend school, work outside the home, and establish an identity which includes some degree of independence from one's husband ..." (Rutledge, 1992: 125). It is reasonable to expect that young women would be more likely than older women to prepare themselves to be effective wage-earners with education, given the expectation of employment, and to take advantage of the opportunity to acquire educations.

Tables 6.1 through 6.3 illustrate both the limited educations of older women, who spent their traditional school years in Vietnam, and also the startling reversal of the effect of gender on education for young women, educated in the United States. Table 6.1 looks at the educational backgrounds of Vietnamese men and women over age 25. Females are more likely than males to be represented in the "less than high school category" and less likely than males to be college graduates or to have graduate degrees.

If we look at Vietnamese women under age 25, we see that the inequality in education between men and women has been lessened and even reversed. Table 6.2 shows high school dropout rates among Vietnamese men and women in the United States, aged 16 through 24. Being a high school dropout is here defined as being neither a school graduate nor being currently enrolled in school. I control here for marriage, since marital status can have an influence on educational attainment and women tend to marry younger than do men, as is shown here by the fact that over three quarters of those in this age group who are married are women.

Young Vietnamese married women are no more likely to be high school dropouts than are young married men, although both are much more likely

Table 6.1. Educational Attainment of Vietnamese Males and Females in the United States, Aged 25 and Over.

	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
Less than high school	31.7	47.3	39.2 (5542)
High school graduate	35.2	33.2	34.3 (4837)
College graduate	26.9	17.0	22.1 (3121)
Graduate degree	6.2	2.5	4.4 (622)
Column Total (N)	51.4 (7255)	48.6 (6867)	100.0 (14122)

χ^2= 487.421, p < .000

Table 6.2. High School Dropout Rates Among Married and Unmarried Vietnamese Males and Females, Aged 16 through 24, in the United States.

	Married			Unmarried		
	Male	Female	Row Total (N)	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
Non-Dropout	71.4	70.4	70.6 (310)	89.6	91.6	90.5 (4749)
Dropout	28.6	29.6	29.4 (129)	10.4	8.4	9.5 (501)
Column Total (N)	23.9 (105)	76.1 (334)	100.0 (439)	57.9 (3038)	42.1 (2212)	100.0 (5250)

χ^2 for married = .044, p = .834
χ^2 for unmarried = 5.696, p < .05

Table 6.3. Current College Attendance Among Married and Unmarried Vietnamese Males and Females, Aged 18 through 24, in the United States.

	Married			Unmarried		
	Male	Female	Row Total (N)	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
Not Enrolled	81.4	80.6	80.8 (349)	63.3	57.7	61.1 (2341)
Enrolled	18.6	19.4	19.2 (83)	36.7	42.3	38.9 (1493)
Column Total (N)	23.6 (102)	76.4 (330)	100.0 (432)	59.4 (2278)	40.6 (1556)	100.0 (3834)

χ^2 for married = .293, p =.864
χ^2 for unmarried = 12.338, p < .000

to be dropouts than are their unmarried peers. Among the unmarried, Vietnamese women are slightly less likely to be dropouts than are the men. The difference between them may, however, be statistically significant as a result of the large sample size.

It is in current college attendance, shown in Table 6.3, that we see the primary differences between Vietnamese men and women. Again, there is no difference in likelihood of current college attendance among married Vietnamese men and women. Among the unmarried, though, young women are significantly more likely to be enrolled in college than are young men.

Statistics from students in the community serving as the focus of study in the present dissertation yield more insight into the educational performance of young Vietnamese women and corroborates the evidence found in the U.S. Census that these young women show surprisingly high levels of scholastic performance. Table 6.4 indicates that the female students surveyed make significantly higher grades than do the male students. 28% of the females reported receiving grades averaging to an "A," compared to only 21% of the males. By contrast, fully 17% of males reported receiving grades averaging to "C" or less, while only 9% of females reported grades of "C" or less.

Young Vietnamese women in this survey also report spending more time on homework than their male coethnics, as we see in Table 6.5 While 6.6% of the males reported that they did not do homework, only 3.3% of the females reported not doing homework. 87% of females reported spending more than a half hour on homework each day, compared to just under 70% of males; and 57% of females reported spending an hour each day on homework, compared to 53% of males.

Corroborating the evidence on college attendance found in current Census data, Table 6.6 shows that young Vietnamese women tend to place greater importance on college attendance than do young Vietnamese men. Interestingly, a slightly higher percentage of females than males

Table 6.4. Averaged Reported Grades Received by Male and Female Adolescents in the New Orleans Vietnamese Community.

	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
C or less	17.1	9.3	13.0 (52)
C+ to B-	8.6	4.7	6.5 (26)
B to B+	52.9	57.9	55.6 (223)
A	21.4	28.0	24.9 (100)
Column Total (N)	46.6 (187)	53.4 (218)	100.0 (401)

$\chi^2 = 9.180$, $p < .05$

Table 6.5. Time Spent on Homework by Male and Female Adolescents in the New Orleans Vietnamese Community.

	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
Doesn't do homework	6.6	3.3	4.8 (19)
Less than 30 minutes per day	23.6	9.5	16.1 (63)
1/2 hr to 1 hr per day	17.0	30.5	24.2 (95)
1 to 2 hrs per day	27.5	29.5	28.6 (112)
Over 2 hrs per day	25.3	27.1	26.3 (103)
Column Total (N)	46.4 (182)	53.6 (210)	100.0 (392)

$\chi^2 = 21.747$, $p < .000$

Table 6.6. Perceptions of Importance of College Attendance Among Male and Female Adolescents in the New Orleans Vietnamese Community.

	Male	Female	Row Total (N)
Definitely won't go	4.9	5.2	5.1 (20)
Attendance not important	7.1	4.3	5.6 (22)
Attendance fairly important	21.9	11.8	16.5 (65)
Attendance very important	66.1	78.7	72.8 (287)
Column Total (N)	46.4 (183)	53.6 (211)	100.0 (394)

$\chi^2 = 9.503$, $p < .05$

reported that they definitely would not go to college, which may be a result of the younger ages at marriage of young women seen in the Census. However, young women were much less likely than men to report that college was "not important" to them and much more likely to report that college was "very important."

Why is it that Vietnamese women, whose educational disadvantages are clear among mature adults, seem to show levels of educational attainment that are at least equal to those of the men and possibly even superior? The information obtained from interviews with those in the Vietnamese community under study here may shed some light on this question. In investigating this question, it is important to look at how fathers, mothers, young men, and young women themselves see education for women, and how education may be related to broader views about gender roles. In addressing these broader views about gender roles, it may be possible to consider whether refuge in the United States has brought about an abrupt break with Indochinese ways of thinking about men and women or whether these ways of thinking have somehow been adjusted to new circumstances.

Views of the Fathers

In talking about the qualities desired in daughters, fathers in the community stressed, first, obedience and, second, achievement. It was clear, moreover, that they did not view these as mutually inconsistent qualities; on the contrary, achievement was seen to be a product of obedience. On the issue of obedience, one father expressed ideas that seemed to be widely held:

> It is important that all children obey their parents. but it is most important for daughters to obey. The daughters will be mothers one day and they must be good mothers. So, they must obey their parents today.

Fathers said that they expected obedience from all children, both sons and daughters. Several said that they differences between family life in Vietnam and family life in the United States meant that Vietnamese-American children could only be expected to obey parents until

marriage, rather than throughout life, as in Vietnam. Most expressed the concern that the greater level of personal freedom in American life might undermine the respect and obedience of children toward their parents. But they overwhelmingly agreed that the perceived need to protect the sexual purity of daughters made the obedience of female children even more important than of male children.

> Of course a boy can get away with more than a girl. A boy can do more before he get a bad name. A boy can get a bad name and still become good later. But if a girl get a bad name, I don't know what she can do to get over (it).

All of the fathers I interviewed made it clear that education for daughters was not only tolerated, but expected. The reasons given by fathers may be classified as into the following categories: (1) perceptions of education as important for preparing young women to contribute to the incomes of their future families, (2) perceptions of education as making young women suitable as wives to relatively high status husbands, and (3) perceptions of education of daughters as a source of status for families of origin.

On education as preparation for contributing to the income of future families, several fathers drew explicit contrasts between the economy of their former homeland and that of the United States. They pointed out that women did participate in the household economy in Vietnam, but that life in the United States required greater amounts of money and that the agricultural work, requiring little formal education, done by women in Vietnam was no longer available in the U.S.

> In Vietnam, the girls helped with the rice, sure, but here nobody's a farmer. You got to have a job to get money. A good wife needs to help her husband. She got to have a job to help and she got to go to school to get a job.

The experience of economic hardship in the United States made fathers all the more conscious of the importance of the two-income family in American life. Wives of the fathers interviewed tended not to work, or to work at relatively low-income, part-time occupations. In either

case, the limited earning capacity of wives was experienced as a hardship. For this reason, education of daughters was seen not simply as a means of individual status attainment for the daughters themselves, but as a means of enhancing the daughters' abilities to contribute to family well-being.

> It is very hard for me being the only one in the family who works. I am a fisher. I make enough money for us to live but I worry all the time. My wife, her English is not good, and she cannot work. So, I want my daughter to go to school so that she and her family will not have these problems. My daughter is good, so she will do what I say and her life will be better than ours.

On the issue of education as a means of making daughters suitable for relatively high status husbands, it became clear that pushing daughters toward academic achievement was not, in the minds of most fathers, a denial of "traditional" gender roles, but an affirmation of those roles under the changed circumstances of life in the United States. It was felt that since education was widely available to women in the U.S., relatively high status husbands would prefer relatively highly educated wives (although less well-educated than themselves) and that young women who had not received sufficient schooling would therefore be at a disadvantage in the marriage marketplace.

> I want my son-in-law to be a doctor or an engineer. A doctor or an engineer does not want a wife that he has to be ashamed of. A nurse is a good job for my daughter. If her husband is a doctor, she can help him in his job. I tell my daughter to study hard so that she will be someone who can be part of a good family.

The very availability of education to women tended to make the education of daughters a matter of status competition among fathers. While education in Vietnam was largely limited to men, the fact that both men and women attend school in the United States tended to make the educational accomplishments of daughters, as well as sons, reflections on the fathers themselves. Interestingly, because higher levels of obedience were expected from the young women, it often appeared that failures or successes by daughters could be seen as failures or successes of the fathers themselves, while failures or successes of sons, who were

seen more as independent actors, were often seen as more individual outcomes.

> The daughter of my neighbor finished college last year. I am ashamed before him if my daughter does not also finish college. If my daughter does less than the daughter of my neighbor that means I am a less good father than my neighbor.

On the issue of relative control over sons and daughters, another father explained:

> Of course I want both my son and my daughter to do good in school. But my son, he is a man, and if he do not do what I want him to do, others will understand. But my daughter, she must do what I tell her to do, and how can I explain if she does not do good?

Views of the Mothers

It was more difficult to discuss views on family with mothers than it was with fathers. The fathers were generally presented as the spokesmen of the families, but it was possible to speak with some women about their ideas about their children. Like the fathers, mothers tended not to see the education and eventual employment of daughters as a rejection of "traditional" Vietnamese gender roles, but as an affirmation of it. However, while fathers tended to stress educational achievement as an outcome of the obedience required from daughters, mothers usually perceived the increased opportunities stemming from education as a means of improving the bargaining positions of their daughters within the traditional gender roles. While mothers did not suggest that independence of men was a desirable goal for their daughters, they did often see lessened degrees of dependence on men as important. Mothers generally accepted the idea that men should hold more power in the family than women, but they felt that there should be less of a disparity than there had been in Vietnam.

> If my daughter no have good job and she marry, the husband can go off with other woman and do what he like. Maybe he good, OK, but if my daughter go school, get good job, make money, then she no have to put up with anything husband do and he have to be good.

We might say that the mothers were "exchange theorists," who saw

education for daughters as means of increasing the daughter's potential resources to improve the daughter's bargaining situations. It was clear that mothers did not seek complete independence for their daughters, nor did the mothers favor the abandonment of a Vietnamese identity in favor of individual assimilation on the part of their daughters into the larger American society. Daughters were almost universally expected to marry and to maintain what was seen as Vietnamese culture through their roles as mothers. Mothers, as well as fathers, expressed the view that daughters required greater control than sons because of the sexual double standard and the part played by this double standard in determining the marriageability of young women. Academic achievement was actually connected to the image of feminine virtue that is associated with "traditional" Vietnamese culture.

> My daughter must be a good girl. That means she must do good in school and she must not go out alone at night with boys. Sometimes my son is bad, but not very bad. He can always do better. But if a girl is bad, people will always see her as bad, so it is very important to be careful with daughters.

Mothers not only accept, they even expect a certain amount of "acting up" from their sons. If a boy is "too good," never rowdy or disorderly, the mother will worry that his excessively unproblematic behavior is evidence of a lack of spirit. The rambunctiousness of sons, from a very early age, is treated with indulgence. In any public place, at church functions or in shops, one may observe little boys playing and running around their mothers, only to be admonished when their play becomes excessively energetic. The daughters, on the other hand, whether they are little girls or young women, show a quiet self-control inculcated by parental control. This parental control may be seen as stemming from fathers, who are seen as the chief authority figures in these Vietnamese households, but it is exercised primarily by mothers, who have the most immediate responsibility for raising children.

One way in which mothers controlled the behavior of daughters more than that of sons was in the expectation that daughters, and not sons,

would help with the housework. In the older generation, housework was almost exclusively a female responsibility. When wives worked outside the home, the work for pay was usually simply added on to the household responsibilities. This tended to be carried over to the younger generation, since mothers looked to their daughters for help in the housework. The pattern was almost identical to that found by Muzny (1989) in the Vietnamese community in Oklahoma City: "Girls were required to study after school, but they were also expected to help their mothers around the house. After working in the kitchen, cleaning the house, or watching the baby, girls would then study at home" (p. 136). For these young women, the time that boys might be able to spend in relatively uncontrolled activities outside the home was consumed by household responsibilities that were added on to their school responsibilities, much as housework might be added on to the paid work responsibilities of their mothers. The result was that daughters were more tightly bound to their mothers and to the domestic sphere, and spent a greater amount of time under the controls and expectations of the family.

Views of Young Men

Adolescent males in this community, insofar as they express opinions on male-female relations in school and afterward, seem to hold some attachment to the idea of a strict separation of the sexes and to have the expectation that young women will be morally superior, while showing themselves to be somewhat more flexible in their ideas about gender roles than are the older men. Observation of young men and young women in the schools and in the communities indicates a strong tendency toward sexually segregated friendship groups. One young man expressed a common attitude:

> Yeah, sure, girls are more good than boys. Everybody knows that. Not too many girls smoke (cigarettes) or drink. So sure they act better in school and get better grades. It's different (for boys and for girls).

The young men I spoke with tended to be acutely aware of the tensions between the "Vietnamese" ideals presented to them by their

elders and the "American" ideals presented to them by the popular media and by their non-Vietnamese peers. They also frequently expressed allegiance to both sets of ideals. They wanted girlfriends who would dress fashionably (i.e., in the fashions current among other teenagers in the United States) and who were fun to be with, not too stodgy. At the same time, those who had ideas about what kinds of wives they wanted showed a great deal of agreement with the older generation's concept of ideal womanhood. Young men generally wanted wives who were sexually inexperienced and would put a priority on motherhood.

> I guess I want a girlfriend who is very American but a wife who is very Vietnamese. I think girls can be both of these things, though. They can wear OK clothes and listen to OK music and still be Vietnamese inside.

Views of Young Women

The young women themselves, not surprisingly, showed the greatest awareness of the contradictions, complications, and frustrations inherent in the gender roles presented to them. At the same time they, like their mothers, expressed a general acceptance of gender roles, and were guided by these roles even while they were sometimes perplexed and frustrated by them. Even if they may have wanted to rebel against the gender expectations, moreover, rebellion was very difficult in this closed community and in these relatively authoritarian families.

Almost all of the young women I spoke with, in school and elsewhere, reported that parental discipline was enforced much more strongly against them than it was against their brothers. Although Vietnamese tradition permits the corporal punishment of all children, almost all the young people I spoke with who said that they had been spanked or beaten at home were females. By contrast, the only young man who said that his father had tried to use physical punishment also reported that he had actively resisted his father's attempt at force.

One young woman, aged 16, whom I spoke with in one of the schools and later interviewed in greater depth by telephone, explained that her father was allowing her to speak with me on the telephone because I was

a teacher and an outsider, who was attempting to learn about Vietnamese people. Cooperating with me was seen as working with someone who represented school and authority. Had I been a young Vietnamese man, calling her for social reasons, she would not have been allowed to speak with me. Her social life, she made it clear, was highly controlled. She was permitted to visit with female friends in their homes, but was not allowed to "hang out" in local restaurants or other public places. If she disobeyed her father or associated with people that did not meet with her father's approval, she said, her father would hit her. When I asked her how she felt about this, she said that she did not like it, but that she understood that there were many dangers facing Vietnamese girls in America and that she understood her father's attitude.

While it is difficult to judge just how common the use of corporal punishment against young women may be, the fact that they are subject to it more often than the young men is an indication of the stricter social controls imposed on females. These social controls, as I have maintained, exist because of the importance of the idea of "the virtuous woman." As I argue above, "the virtuous woman" is characterized not only by passive obedience, but also by living up to higher standards of behavior than the male counterpart. These higher standards of behavior, in the American social context in which economic adaptation and upward mobility have become primary goals, have come to involve greater pressures for academic achievement.

One of the high school teachers, who knew a great deal about the Vietnamese community, was candidly discussing the grades of his students with me. He mentioned that one particular young woman almost never made any grade below an "A." "She has to," he said, "if she brings home a 'B', her father beats her."

Resentment of being held, on occasions violently, to higher moral standards, was common among the young women.

> It's not fair. My brother can stay out all night with his friends and they (the parents) don't say anything.

Most of the women reported that their parents were uncomfortable with the American custom of dating. Many reported that, rather than rebel openly against their parents, they would leave the house with a group of female friends, and then later go off alone with young men. A common complaint was that parents were "old-fashioned" or "too Vietnamese." They often felt that their parents were still, mentally, living in Vietnam rather than America and they often expressed wishes that their parents would "loosen up."

> They don't understand about life here. They want us to do everything they way they did things when they were in Vietnam. And it isn't the same.

Parents, however, are not the only source of social control and they are not the sole object of this frustration. Many young women spoke about the role of "public opinion" in this tightly-knit little community.

> It's so easy for girls to get a bad reputation here. You really have to watch everything you do.

> There's gossip all over the place. All my neighbors know everything. They even know some things that never happened.

Gender Roles and Social Control

I have been arguing that the academic achievements of Vietnamese adolescents can be understood as products of the systems of community constraints and supports that surround them. This perspective can also help us to understand gender differences in achievement. If social control plays an important part in bringing about a certain pattern of behavior, then those individuals who are subject to greater levels of social control will exhibit this pattern of behavior to a greater extent.

Paradoxically, the gender roles that have limited the educational achievement of women in Vietnam are serving to promote the educational achievement of Vietnamese American women. Young Vietnamese women are showing higher levels of scholastic performance than their male counterparts not because these young women are rejecting or rebelling against patriarchal ethnic social patterns, but because of the social

controls placed on them by these patriarchal patterns within the context of the immigrant striving for social and economic adaptation.

This interpretation of the current situation of Vietnamese women should not be taken as in any sense justifying gender inequality. It is yet another example of the complexity of human societies. The subjection of women in itself, of course, is an undesirable phenomenon. But intrinsically undesirable situations may have desirable consequences, consequences that subvert those situations.

Kibria (1993, pp. 109-112) has noted that the employment of Vietnamese American women has greatly narrowed the gap in power between men and women in this new American group. It is reasonable to expect that as Vietnamese American women acquire educations and enter professions this gap will be narrowed even more. The interviews above show that many of these young women already feel uncomfortable with the tight social controls placed on them by the ethnic community. This discomfort with control, and the ability and unwillingness to resist it, is likely to increase with the elevation of status initially promoted by social control.

Chapter Summary

Gender roles constitute an important aspect of any social group. This chapter has described the gender roles for Vietnamese American young people, arguing that young women experience greater social controls than do young men. I have also provided evidence that the young women outperform the young men. I have argued that these phenomena are linked, that social controls provide young women with "social capital" by pushing them to achieve. This chapter, then, has set the stage for moving beyond a description of Vietnamese American young people, to an empirical examination of the argument that social relations within the Vietnamese community promote academic achievement among young people by providing the latter with a system of social supports and constraints.

Chapter 7. Community Outsiders

Up to this point, I have concentrated on the high achievers among Vietnamese American students. But there is another side to the story. If the high achievers are those who show high levels of involvement, who are the low achievers? In this section, I will consider the young people who do not show high levels of accomplishment, concentrating in particular on the "deviants," or problem children.

In an interesting twist on Robert Park's theory of "the marginal man" (1928), the deviant low achievers in this community appear to be "marginal," but marginal with regard to their own ethnic group rather than, as in Park's view, marginal to the larger society as a result of being caught between the ethnic group and the larger society. Monsignor Dominic Luong, pastor of the Vietnamese church, has observed that the youths who spend their time idling on street corners or using drugs are those who are alienated from the society of their adult coethnics. Dr. Joseph Vuong, a Vietnamese counselor at a New Orleans area junior high school, refers to the youth on the margins of the local Vietnamese culture as "overadapted" to American society. "They have become Americans in their own eyes, but they do not have the advantages of white Americans. So, they lose the direction that their Vietnamese culture can give them. Since they do not know where they are going, they just drift" (Joseph Vuong, personal communication, 11/2/93). The "adapted" Vietnamese youth, according to Dr. Vuong, receive direction from the ethnic networks that surround them and, as a result, they pursue well-established goals with energy and intensity.

The "underadapted," in Dr. Vuong's terms are the Vietnamese young people who retain a strong sense of identification with the Vietnamese community, and therefore remain under the direction of this community, but are unable, because of poor English skills or other limitations, to do well in the American educational system or to get jobs outside the ethnic network. The "underadapted" do not stand out as either the

celebrated valedictorians or the juvenile delinquents stand out, and they tend to attract less attention.

"There were (Vietnamese) kids in my class in high school who didn't do much after high school," one college student from this neighborhood told me. "What are they doing? Oh, I guess the girls do things like work in beauty parlors in Versailles and wait to get married and the boys work in Vietnamese stores. They don't have to leave (the Vietnamese neighborhood). If they're satisfied there, there's lots of things for them to do." Since there is an emerging ethnic economy, these underachievers can supply the economy with its cheap labor, in turn receiving a measure of cushioning from the larger American society.

It is much more difficult to obtain information on "deviant low achievers" than on success stories, particularly when the person seeking information is an adult, white male asking about Asian teenagers. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain some usable information. I found it much easier, of course, to get cooperation from policemen, social workers, and others working with young people than from the young people themselves, but I did find a number of youthful informants who were also willing to talk candidly about themselves and their lives.

In this section, I use information obtained from the survey administered in neighborhood schools, from interviews with people in the Vietnamese community, and from direct observation to attempt to describe the "bad kids", as local Vietnamese people will sometimes describe this minority among these adolescents. I will begin by trying to say who these young people are. Next, I will attempt to delineate some of the sources of adolescent deviance among teenage Vietnamese Americans, including problems in family relations, influences from both ethnic and non co-ethnic peers, and the apparent role of adults and adult criminal organizations in promoting adolescent crime. Then, I will attempt to draw on both labeling theory and theories of the social construction of ethnicity to examine how the process of developing a Vietnamese American

ethnic identity within the community leads to a reinforcement of deviance among some adolescents. Finally, I will describe a program of intervention that has attempted, seemingly with some success, to address problems of low achievement and deviance by attempting to draw young people more tightly into the local Vietnamese community, and by creating a cooperative network of parents to provide increased oversight and social control.

Who are the Outsiders?

To some extent, the characteristics of the low-achievers and problem children in this neighborhood are simply the opposite of those of the success stories described in the main body of this dissertation. We may take substance abuse and confrontations with legal authorities as two chief indicators of "outsider" status. Survey data may provide some insight into the characteristics of those who have had problems with the law and have engaged in substance abuse. Before looking at the survey data, though, a context for interpreting statistics may be set by go through some of the information obtained through qualitative research.

Almost all of my informants have maintained that the "problem" children, usually referred to a "bad kids" and sometimes as "Americanized," are most often found among those who were born in the United States or arrived here before age 12. When the weather is good, they can usually be found sitting on the medians on Dwyer Boulevard and Alcee Fortier, smoking cigarettes. They may also be found in local restaurants or coffee shops, sitting and smoking cigarettes. As Lieutenant Jack Willoughby, in an internal training document about Vietnamese gangs used by the New Orleans Police Department, notes; "being a gang member involves a lot of 'hanging out.' Gang bangers hang out in pool halls, coffee shops, game rooms, and on the street" (Willoughby, 1993: 8).

The extent of formal gang activity in New Orleans East is difficult to determine. Most Vietnamese residents will deny that there are formal

youth gangs, or they will say that the serious gang activity is a matter of people from outside the community coming through on special occasions such as the Vietnamese New Year. Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that gangs do exist, although they are generally not as well-organized as the ethnic ganges in Los Angeles, and many are ephemeral in character One of the gangs that has been identified to me is known as *Thanh Sang*, which is believed to have connections with Vietnamese criminal organizations in Biloxi, Mississippi. Its most common activities, aside from "hanging out", are petty theft and robbery, although more violent criminal activities, including murder, are not unknown.

Neither local police nor community members willing to discuss the subject are able to say with certainty which young people are gang members and which are "hangers-on" or "wannabes". For both serious gang members and hangers-on, the popular presentation of self includes extremely baggy shorts, over-sized T-shirts or sweatshirts, baseball caps, and sandals or sneakers. It should be noted that these items of dress are associated with non-Vietnamese gang-type youth and that the apparel would therefore suggest that these Vietnamese are assimilating to the "wrong segment" of American society.

Earrings, and jewelry in noses and other parts of the face may be found on some youths. Tattoos are very popular among both gang members and those who wish to be taken for "tough guys". Dragons and tigers are among the most common professionally or semi-professionally drawn tatoos. Three or five dots tattooed on the hand or lower arm may also be found and can be self-administered (according to Willoughby, 1993, p. 24, the three dots can stand for "My Crazy Life," "I Don't Care," or "I'll Take Any Dare," and the five dots mean "A Group of Good Friends."). The dots may also be burned into the hand or arm with a cigarette, rather than tattooed.

Many of the younger "bad kids," especially those in junior high school, spend school hours in the swampy forests of the Bayou Sauvage

Wildlife Refuge that surrounds the Vietnamese neighborhood, smoking marijuana and cigarettes. This protects them from being found by the police or by others looking for truants.

There is at least one reputed "crash pad" in the neighborhood, a nondescript brick house on Gilbert Street, close to the Associated Catholic Charities office. This house, occupied by a revolving tenancy of male teenagers, is believed to be a center of local gang activities. The police have made several raids at this house, arresting occupants for possession and sale of marijuana and cocaine. Those arrested have been bailed out almost immediately. My informants believe that the same adult or adults who bail them out also continue to rent the house. Once again, an adult Vietnamese criminal organization in Biloxi is usually mentioned as the sponsor of these activities.

Females are much less likely than males to be identified as "bad kids," by themselves and by local adults. Minh Pham, the Associated Catholic Charities social worker who works with teenage girls in the area, says that there are groups of girls who skip school together, and who sometimes associate with the young men, but, for the most part, falling behind in school and eventually dropping out are the most serious offenses of the girls. "They always like to say, 'at least we're not as bad as the boys,'" Pham told me (personal communication, 2/17/95).

These lower levels of female deviance may be ascribed to the greater social controls placed on females, which I have discussed above. Still, while females are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors, once they become known as "bad" they also have much further to fall. Prostitution is a fairly common recourse among young women who have established an irreparably bad reputation. Many of the young women who work at the Tokyo Massage Parlor, the Oriental Massage Parlor, and establishments with similar names. Although I have not engaged in participant observation in any of the area massage parlors, I have been informed that the activities are rarely limited to back-rubs.

Sources of Outsider Status

Families and Family Relations:

Maintaining efficacious relations among parents and children may be difficult for all families that contain adolescents, but it is especially so for immigrant families, in which children may be faced with conflicting sets of expectations from their parents and from those parts of the larger society with which the children are in most immediate contact. Communication between non-English speaking parents and almost exclusively English speaking schools poses a further problem, undermining the ability of parents to keep abreast of their children's school progress and to direct attendance at schools and behavior in schools. Few parents in this community have any contact with the schools.

Social worker Minh Pham, who works with adolescent girls in the Versailles neighborhood, described to me what he believes is one of the chief sources of undesirable behavior among these girls:

> They see that their parents are not like most Americans and they hear their parents always talking about Vietnam. They think their parents' minds are back in another country and that nothing their parents have to say is relevant to life in America. Sometimes they're right; sometimes their parents are too old-fashioned or too "Vietnamese". But I think that often the Vietnamese ways of their parents *can* work in America, and that some of these kids are too ready to just throw away everything they get from their parents. (Minh Pham, personal communication, 2/17/95)

To some extent, an unwillingness to accept the advice or guidance of immigrant parents is a matter of individual variation, lending itself to strictly psychological, rather than sociological, analysis. Still, I have observed that there are family features that render some children more prone to problems in relating to their parents. I will attempt to describe these by focusing on cases of individual families that seem to represent common sources of problems.

Following Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979), we can conceive of a set of relations among family members as an ecosystem, in which on-going processes promote adaptation to a larger environment. However, the

immediate social environment may also be seen as an ecosystem, a pattern of interdependence among families and other social units, which makes possible adaptation to a still larger environment. Thus, interactions among individual family members enable them to function in a community setting, and interactions among families and other primary groups determine how the community will act as a mechanism for adapting to broader social and economic exigencies.

In this concentric model, problems in adaptation may occur because an individual is insufficiently integrated into an effective family system, because the family is insufficiently integrated into an immediate social system (such as a community), or because of problems in the integration of the immediate social system into the surrounding social patterns. One should not assume that adaptation to those surrounding social patterns is an unqualified good: the prevailing social structure can be a source of injustice and inequality, and not simply a morally beneficent or morally neutral environment that requires acceptance and adaptation. But the model will, I think, help to explain some of the circumstances in which young people in an immigrant community may find social adaptation difficult.

We can describe the problems in family relations that affect Vietnamese American adolescents in terms of integration into these three levels of systems: the integration of the young person into the family system, the integration of young people into their communities through their family systems, and the integration of young people into the dominant society through their community systems. I will use case studies of Vietnamese American families to show how each level can create problems of adaptation.

Problems in family relations that may lead to delinquent, or deviant behavior on the part of Vietnamese American young people may be placed into three categories, with reference to integration at each systemic level. The first we may refer to as the "Absent or Partially

Absent of the Family System," in which the family relations that make possible adaptation to larger systems are not present. The second we may refer to as the "Community-Marginal Family System," in which links between individual families and the ethnic community are inadequate to provide constraints and supports to individual families. The third we may refer to as the "Society-Marginal Family System," in which the linkage between the family and the dominant society is inadequate.

Category 1: Absent or Partially Absent Family System

Hanh (not his real name) is 17 years of age and attended three years of school in the United States before quitting. Hanh was born in a coastal fishing village in Vietnam. His father had been a South Vietnamese soldier who was killed in the war. Until he was 10 years old, he lived with his mother, several younger siblings, and his maternal grandparents. He reports that the fishing boats were often used for escapes, or attempted escapes from Vietnam. He and two adult uncles left the village one night. His mother remained behind with the small siblings.

The boat that Hanh and his uncles were on was met at sea by a commercial ship, and the passengers were brought to a refugee camp in Hong Kong. After several months in the refugee camp, Hanh was sponsored by another uncle, already in the United States, and he settled in New Orleans with his uncle's family. Hanh reports that he found school difficult, and often skipped school, which caused him to fall further and further behind in his studies. Although his uncle, with whom he still lives, provided him with housing and food, his adult relatives took little interest in his progress in studies.

Hanh spends most of his time with a group of young men who have also left school. Although he will not admit to criminal activities, adults in the community who are familiar with Hanh and his friends claim that they engage in acts of petty theft. I have also seen Hanh and his group smoking marijuana more or less openly. In speaking of his friends,

Hanh reports that he looks upon them, rather than his uncle and aunt, as his family:

> These dudes are my real family. They look out for me and I look out for them. If anybody messes with me, they gonna jump in, and if anybody messes with them, I gonna jump in too.

Ngoc (not his real name) is a 16 year-old who left Vietnam by plane with his father and older brother when Ngoc was about three years of age. They were apparently allowed to leave Vietnam under the Orderly Departure Program, an arrangement between the United States and the Vietnamese government which allowed some Vietnamese who had been involved with the Americans during the war to leave legally. Ngoc's mother was left behind in Vietnam for reasons that are not clear. After being initially re-settled in Wisconsin, the family moved to New Orleans because of family connections.

Ngoc's father works as a fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico and is rarely home. The father speaks little English and, outside of work, also generally interacts little with the other Vietnamese people around him. When asked about his father, Ngoc responds,

> Well, I see him sometimes when he's in. We get along OK, I guess. But, you know, we don't really have that much to say to each other.

Ngoc is still enrolled in high school as a sophomore, but is frequently absent and seems to take little interest in school. Much of his time is spent "hanging out" on the streets or in the dense swampy woods that surround the Vietnamese neighborhood in New Orleans East. Although his close friends are all Vietnamese, Ngoc reports that they know all of the non-Vietnamese kids in the neighborhood. He and his peers have few ties to the adults in the community. In his words,

> I don't have that much to say to the old people around here. Their heads are all back in Vietnam and I'm here, so we just don't have that much to say to each other.

Category 2: Community-Marginal Family System

Man (not his real name) is a 16-year old, born in the United States, who was until recently a sophomore in high school. Soft-spoken,

with a gentle manner, Man was always eager to talk to me and he volunteered his telephone number so I could talk to him outside of school. I found it difficult to believe that Man was seen as a delinquent and a trouble-maker in school, but his teachers assured me that this was the case. During the time that we had contact with each other, Man was expelled for allegedly slashing a teacher's tires after school, and then re-admitted, and then expelled again for bringing a knife to school.

Man lives with his mother and father on the fringes of the Vietnamese settlement in New Orleans East. The father is employed in a technical profession and has a good salary and maintains few ties to the Vietnamese community. Man reports that his father almost always speaks English to him, although his mother and father sometimes speak Vietnamese with one another.

Adults familiar with the family describe it as a household with many problems. The father is said to have a girl-friend, with whom he spends much of his time. One teacher who knows Man's family reports that Man feels a great deal of resentment toward his father. Man's remarks to me about his father support this view:

> Sometimes I think I don't really like my dad that much. He's always trying to push me and tell me what do and I don't see why I ought to do what he says. He ought to run his life and let me run mine. He says I owe him respect and I don't see it that way.

Man told me that he had no sense of himself as being Vietnamese:

> I've never been to Vietnam and I don't think I want to go. They wouldn't have the TV programs that I like there and life there is probably pretty boring. I'm American.

Despite this disavowal of things Vietnamese, Man's own group of friends are all Vietnamese. He denies that he and his friends constitute a gang, and claims that they have no name for themselves (one knowledgeable teacher remarked that I should be skeptical of these claims). Nevertheless, he admits that fighting is one of the activities he and his friends are known for. For the most part, he says, they fight

with young people from the smaller West Bank Vietnamese community. Speaking of the West Bank rivals, Man boasted to me one day:

> They're afraid of us 'cause they know we're bad. We can beat them any time any place ... we have to fight them so they'll respect us and respect our territory. We don't want them coming over here. We don't go over there alone either, but if its a group of us, no problem, because we know we can take them on.

While Hanh and Ngoc look to their peers as a substitute family, because of an absence of family relations, Man apparently is drawn to his adolescent peer group because of weak relations within his family. It is notable that Man's family is essentially a family of outsiders, standing alone. While his father does have a good job, and therefore, arguably, a source of "human capital", the father seems to be alienated from his co-ethnics and therefore lacks "social capital". Alienated from his own family and from the adult Vietnamese community, Man seeks adaptation to American society through an adolescent peer group.

Category 3: Society-Marginal Family System

Thanh (not her real name) is a 15 year old freshman in high school, who arrived in the United States as an infant and has no memory of Vietnam. She is the youngest in a family of six children. Her mother is close to fifty years of age and her father is about sixty. Neither parents speak any English.

Thanh is currently having trouble keeping up in school, primarily because she has skipped so many days. She will often dress for school in the morning, but instead of walking to school she meets a group of female friends and they go to a restaurant or take the bus to a shopping mall. Because of Thanh's parents' inability to speak English, there is little contact between them and the school and they are unaware of the extent of Thanh's truancy.

Thanh expresses exasperation with her parents:

> They're just kinda out of it. They don't know anything about life in this country and they're always talking about what it was like back in Vietnam. What has Vietnam got to do with me? Sometimes I don't even get what it is they're talking about.

Minh Pham, the social worker who is concerned with teenage girls in the neighborhood, observes that young people in the situation of Thanh eventually drop out of school: "they fall so far behind by skipping so much that they get to the point where they can't catch up at all, so they get frustrated and just quit.

Dai (not his real name) is a 14 year old high school freshman whose parents arrived from Vietnam a year before his birth. His father speaks some English but works at two different jobs and is rarely home. His mother has not learned to speak English and Dai must act as her interpreter on the rare occasions when she finds it necessary to speak with non-Vietnamese people.

Dai often misses school and frequently sleeps in class when he does attend. This seems to be due to his habit of staying out all night with his friends. When I asked him how his mother feels about this habit, he shrugged:

> What does she have to say about it? She doesn't take care of me, I take care of her. I don't have to make explanations to anybody.

Peer Influences:

Peer influences cannot be separated from family and community influences since, as we have seen above, one of the primary ways in which families and the community direct the behavior of young people is by controlling the types of peers with whom they associate. Still, while the family systems model described above may help to describe the etiology of delinquency and underachievement in school, it is not completely accurate to describe the "low-achievers" or "bad kids" in this neighborhood solely in terms of the outsider status in this community. They are, after all, not just individuals who have failed to find a place in the ethnic community. They also have their own social networks and their own accepted attitudes.

The chief characteristic of the young people who engage in problematic behavior is the fact that almost all of their significant

others are drawn from their own age group. Like the young people described by Elijah Anderson in his ethnographic study of youth culture in Chicago (1990), these youths are almost entirely age-segregated. Their behavior is reinforced by tightly-knit social circles. One young man explained,

> I ain' gonna go against my partners. If the old people don't like something we do, that's their problem. I don't care what they think. I care what the kids I hang out with think.

Some of these youths, as I have mentioned appear to have organized themselves into formal gangs, although they tend to be extremely secretive and dislike naming or discussing gangs. Looking at these young people from the point of view of their family origins may incline us toward a "social control" model of their deviance, along the lines suggested by Travis Hirschi (1969) Because of weak attachments to the community, lack of commitment to it, and lack of ethnic involvement, mediated by families, young people do not conform to expected behavioral standards.

But social control is just one side of the explanation of human behavior, the side that considers why people do not conform to a desired behavioral pattern. "Social control theory takes conformity, rather than deviance, as problematic and seeks to find mechanisms that force people to conform and prevent them from engaging in the forms of deviance they might enjoy if all social constraints were removed" (Bankston, 1995: 61). It is clear, however, that the young people under consideration in this section are not simply falling away from conformity to the expectations of the adult community into completely anarchic orgies of individualistic anti-social behavior. Their baggy-panted uniforms and close-cropped hair indicate that they are replacing adult society with a society of peers.

A social control perspective, then, can help us understand why these outsiders are outside the adult social network, but in order to understand the "youth culture" that replaces this adult social network, it is necessary to adopt the major theoretical alternative to social

control theory in theoretical explanations of deviant behavior, social learning theory. The social learning model, in the words of Walter, Vaughn, and Cohall (1993) posits that young people engage in deviant behavior "... because the behavioral norms, values, and beliefs of their primary reference groups encourage such behavior" (p. 975).

Social control and social learning, I would argue, are complementary perspectives. In the present case, we have seen how absence of effective controls from family and community can result in a failure to integrate young people into the ethnic social system. But human beings do not become asocial as a result of not becoming members of any given society (on the human as a "social animal," see Wrong, 1994: 1-4). Having "slipped through the cracks" of the ethnic social order, young Vietnamese Americans must learn another pattern of social behavior.

Social worker Minh Pham has remarked of many of the young people with whom he works in the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East that "they want to be American. But what they know about America is usually the worst part of it. They listen to rap songs about shooting policemen and watch movies with everybody killing each other. A lot of the American kids they know are kids who skip school or quit school and get in trouble a lot. So, I think the problem is that they're becoming part of the wrong part of America" (Minh Pham, personal communication, 2/17/95).

Portes and Zhou (1994) have argued that the concentration of members of new immigrant groups in relatively poor areas of the United States "exposes the children of immigrants to the adversarial subculture that marginalized native youth have developed to cope with their own difficult situation" (p. 23). Non-coethnic peers appear to an important source of the learned social behavior displayed by young Vietnamese in the Versailles neighborhood.

Interactions between "outsider" Vietnamese youth and non-Vietnamese youth are interesting because they demonstrate how members of different

ethnic groups can retain separate identities while displaying essentially identical forms of behavior. During the time that I worked with the *Dung Lac* youth group, I had numerous occasions to observe interactions between the troubled Vietnamese youth and the African American youth with whom they shared the neighborhood.

In matters of dress and musical taste Vietnamese and African American youth were nearly identical. Both groups favored short hair, baggy pants, over-sized T-shirts, male earrings, and baseball caps worn backwards. Since these are fashions favored by teenagers throughout the United States, their adoption by the Vietnamese could be interpreted as indicating that Vietnamese youth had been "culturally assimilated" into American youth culture.

While very similar in matters of dress, though, the Vietnamese continually maintained a separateness from their African American peers. When meeting and talking on the street, they would interact with each other in small groups of each racial group. I witnessed, on a number of occasions, several Vietnamese American young men approaching several African American young men, or vice versa. I have been told that Vietnamese-Black fights are fairly common occurrences, but I did not see any of these. I did see members of the two racial groups standing or sitting together, sharing cigarettes or beer. They obviously all knew each other by name, and had frequent social contacts with each other, but also obviously remained separate cliques, whose individual dealings were predicated on their separate clique memberships.

It would be a mistake, I think, to characterize Vietnamese American youth in this community as "culturally assimilated but not structurally assimilated" into the native youth society of their neighborhood. It would be more accurate to see the social structure of the age-segregated youth of both racial groups as rooted in race-based clique membership. When a Vietnamese young man would tell me that he had many Black friends, this did not necessarily indicate that he had become a part of any local

African American peer group. More often, it meant that this young man was himself a member of a Vietnamese American peer group that engaged in frequent social interactions with members of African American peer groups.

Thus, the Vietnamese American youths who are often seen by their elders as "Americanized" have not simply dropped their Vietnamese identities and adopted American youth culture instead. Rather, their ethnic identities are part of a youth society in which young people confront each other and negotiate with each other on the basis of ethnicities. The mixture of English slang and Vietnamese suggests a process of "ethnogenesis" among these teenagers. As this term has been used by Andrew Greeley (1974), the process of ethnogenesis refers to the development of new forms of ethnicity, rather than the loss of ethnicity, that may occur among immigrant group members.

Community Reinforcement of Outsider Status:

Some of the chief sources of outsider status, then, may be found in lack of integration into the community through the family and in the learning of certain forms of behavior and types of attitudes from peers. In understanding the perpetuation of "deviant" status among the "bad" kids, though, we may draw on a third theoretical explanation of deviant behavior, labeling theory, and observe the process of labeling in a immigrant community that is defining itself in terms of shared ethnicity. Labeling theorists argue that a deviant identity is adopted by people after they have been "labeled" as "delinquent" or "crazy" by others. Labeling theory focuses on the group whose norms the deviant breaks, rather than on the individual offender. As Howard Becker (1963: 9) described this theoretical perspective, "social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders." In order to see clearly the norms and choices of labeling in a given society, then, it is important to understand the social

situation that generates the norms. Here, the social situation generating the norms is an ethnic community with a history of flight and exile.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that the Vietnamese American community is a primary means of adaptation for members of a new immigrant group. Joane Nagel (1994: 167) has maintained that both ethnicity and ethnic communities are socially constructed from "the interplay between ethnic group actions and the larger social structures with which they interact." Thus, the Vietnamese community and its attitudes and expectations are not simply cultural transfers from across the sea, they are attempts to draw on historical experiences.

Many forms of behavior that might be regarded as "deviant" outside the Vietnamese community do not meet with disapproval inside of it. For instance, as I have indicated above, non-declaration of income and tax avoidance appear to be fairly widespread practices, although it would probably be impossible to determine just how widespread. Tax avoidance, however, does not challenge the use of ethnic ties as means of dealing with a difficult and often unaccepting larger society.

Interviews with people in the Vietnamese community suggest that the boundaries of ethnicity are established by drawing on a common ethnic identity to support one another in socioeconomic adaptation to a new environment. Therefore, the behavior of young people is found to be unacceptable to the extent that it does not contribute to this collective project. Since cooperation in socioeconomic adaptation defines membership in the group, young people who are seen as not participating are defined as non-members.

"Most of the kids here are good, respectful," remarked one middle-aged man. "But some of them are just not Vietnamese at all."

Tony Tran, the Associated Catholic Charities social worker who organized the current *Dung Lac* youth program, bemoaned the fact that once young people are labelled as "bad kids" they become outsiders to the community, not just because the young people themselves have trouble

fitting in, but because the community itself will no longer accept them. Tran explained to me the difficulties he had in starting his program:

> I had real trouble in getting the adults here to support my project. Once they identify a young person as a problem, they don't want to anything to do with them, they want to just forget about them. They don't want to let them (the problem adolescents) take part in the life of the community.

Community Outsiders: Evidence From Survey Data

In this section, I will examine the characteristics of "low achievers and deviants" found in the survey data. If academic achievement is positively related to involvement in the ethnic community, then we should expect that undesirable or problematic forms of behavior are negatively related to adolescent involvement in the ethnic community. Therefore, I will here identify indicators of undesirable behavior, attempt to say who are the young people most likely to engage in problematic behavior, and investigate whether their responses to survey items are consistent with the segmented assimilation argument.

Alcohol and drug abuse and confrontations with legal authorities are clearly forms of problematic behavior, and those in the community tend to identify these as characteristic behaviors of problematic adolescents or youthful deviants. Theoretically, it seems quite safe to assume a high degree of correlation among these behaviors. In fact, the zero order correlation between drug abuse and alcohol abuse is r=.676, the correlation between amount of drug abuse and the number of times an individual has been stopped by the police is r=.587, and the correlation between alcohol abuse and being stopped by the police is r=.641.

Table 7.1 gives frequencies of drug use, alcohol use to the point of intoxication, and number of times respondents report being stopped by the police. For both of the substance abuse variables, the two largest categories tend to be "non-users" and "heavy-users". 89% of the students report never having used drugs and 9% of respondents report having used drugs five times or more. Only a few students report low levels of drug use. A fair number of students report being drunk one or two times or

Table 7.1. Frequencies of Drug Use, Alcohol Use to the Point of Drunkenness, and Number of Times Stopped by Police Among Vietnamese American Students of New Orleans East.

	%	N
Drug Use		
Never	89.3	359
1 time	.5	2
2 or 3 times	1.0	4
4 or 5 times	.5	2
5 times or more	8.7	35
Alcohol Abuse		
Never	77.4	311
1 time	4.2	17
2 or 3 times	3.0	12
4 or 5 times	.7	3
5 times or more	14.7	59
Stopped by Police		
Never	77.9	313
1 time	6.5	26
2 or 3 times	2.7	11
4 or 5 times	5.7	23
5 times or more	7.2	29

two or three times, but, the two largest categories are never having been intoxicated (77%) and having been intoxicated more than five times.

Most students report never having been stopped by the police, but among those who have been stopped by the police the distribution is somewhat more evenly spread than it is for the substance abuse variables. This may be because some of those who were stopped only one or two times were stopped for traffic offenses or other minor reasons, or it may be because there is variation in how often some of those engaging in problematic behavior have been caught at it. For these reasons, being stopped by the police would probably be an inadequate indicator of problematic behavior by itself. However, if we combine it with the two measures of substance abuse, the resulting index should be a reasonably dependable measure of deviant activities in general.

Because there is such a high correlation among these variables, we may take them as indicators of a single underlying characteristic of "problematic behavior" and add them together to create a single composite variable. This variable ranges from "0" (the respondent has never used drugs, never used alcohol to the point of intoxication, and has never been stopped by the police) to "12" (the respondent reports using drugs five times or more, reports being drunk five times or more, and reports being stopped by the police five times or more). The overwhelming majority of Vietnamese American students in the survey (69.4%) reported never having engaged in problematic behavior of the sort indicated by questions about substance abuse and confrontations with the police. About one out of every five students (20.9%) received scores from "1" to "7", which indicate having engaged in some substance abuse or having been stopped by the police at some time. About one out of every ten students (9.7%) received scores of "8" or greater, which indicates heavy engagement in problematic behavior.

Who are the students who engage in heavy problematic behavior? Table 7.2 shows that they are mainly males. About 77% of problem

Table 7.2. Sex of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese-American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row total (N)
Male	43.4	76.9	46.6 (187)
Female	56.6	23.1	53.4 (214)
Column total (N)	90.3 (362)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (401)

χ^2=15.93, $p < .01$

students, defined as those who exhibit use of alcohol and drugs and confrontations with the police, are young men. They also tend to be those born or reared in the U.S. Table 7.3 shows that 85% of these problem students were born in the U.S. or arrived before 1980. 85% of these problem students, in other words, have either spent their entire lives in the U.S. or have little memory of life outside the U.S. 10% of the problem students arrived in the United States between 1980 and 1984, that is, before they reached puberty. Only 2% arrived between 1985 and 1989. None of them arrived in the 1990s. Among the students that I have defined as "non-problem" students, on the other hand, 30% arrived in the 1990s. Clearly serious behavioral problems are found disproportionately among young men who have grown up in the United States.

If we ask which school the problem students attend, Table 7.4 makes it clear that they are to be found in both of the schools that concentrate a majority of Vietnamese students, but not in the elite school. 51.3% of found at Sarah Reed and 48.7% are found at Marion Abramson. It should be remembered that many of the students with serious behavioral problems drop out of school before high school, and therefore are not represented in these data.

I have discussed the issue of family characteristics at some length above. It might be expected from this discussion that the problem students would be somewhat more likely to come from one parent families and somewhat less likely to come from families containing grandparents than are the non-problem students and that families of problem students would show somewhat less involvement in the ethnic community and somewhat less identification with Vietnamese ethnicity. Table 7.5 considers the first question, that of family structure.

The relationship between family structure and problematic behavior is not statistically significant using a two-tailed test, but it is in the expected direction. 30.8% of problem students come from one-parent or no-parent families, compared to only 17.9% of non-parent families.

Table 7.3. Year of Arrival of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row total (N)
Pre-1980 or U.S.-born	51.2	84.6	54.5 (219)
1980-1984	14.3	10.3	139 (56)
1985-1989	5.0	5.1	5.0 (20)
1990 and after	29.5	0.0	26.6 (107)
Column total (N)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

χ^2=19.11, $p < .01$

Table 7.4. Schools Attended by Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row Total (N)
Sarah Reed	50.7	51.3	50.7
Abramson	45.2	48.7	45.5
Ben Franklin	4.1	0.0	3.7
Column Total (N)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

χ^2=1.71, p=.425

Table 7.5. Family Structure of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row total (N)
Single parent/no parent	17.9	30.8	19.2 (77)
Two-parent family	66.4	61.5	65.9 (265)
Two parents and grandparent	15.7	7.7	14.9 (60)
Column Total (N)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

χ^2=4.68, p=.096

Only 7.7% of problem students live in households containing grandparents, compared to 15.7% of non-problem students.

On the question of parental involvement in the ethnic community, the parents of non-problem students tend to show greater membership in ethnic organizations than parents of problem students do, as seen in Table 7.6. Only 64% of non-problem students reported that their parents were not members of any ethnic community organizations, compared to 90% of problem students. One out of every four non-problem students had a parent who was a member of one community organization, compared to 3% of problem students. Twelve percent of non-problem students had parents who were members of two or more community organizations, compared to 8% of problem students.

Parents' marital preferences for their children may be used as an indicator of the strength of parents' subjective identification with Vietnamese ethnicity. Table 7.7 gives the results of a crosstabulation of parents' marital preference for children and problematic behavior. It is interesting that the 13 young people who reported either that their parents did not want them to marry a Vietnamese person or that their parents preferred that they marry a non-Vietnamese were all in the non-problem category. However, the problem students were almost twice as likely as the non-problem students to report that their parents did not care whether they married someone who was Vietnamese or not. Moreover, the modal category for the problem students is the category of parents preferring a Vietnamese spouse for children, while the modal category for non-problem children is the category of parents definitely wanting a Vietnamese spouse for children. Since most parents appear to prefer that their children marry someone Vietnamese, it seems that the difference between the two groups of respondents is in the degree of commitment of parents to endogamy for their children. Problem students were more likely to report that their parents did not care or merely preferred that they marry someone Vietnamese, while non-problem students were more

Table 7.6. Membership in Ethnic Community Organizations of Parents of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row Total (N)
No organizations	63.6	89.7	66.2 (266)
One organization	24.8	2.6	22.6 (91)
Two or more	11.6	7.7	11.2 (45)
Column Total (N)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

χ^2=11.79, p< .01

Table 7.7. Parents' Marital Preferences for Children of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row Total (N)
Don't want Vietnamese spouse for child	2.3	0.0	2.1 (8)
Prefer non-Vietnamese spouse for child	1.4	0.0	1.3 (5)
Not important to parents	16.2	30.6	17.6 (68)
Prefer Vietnamese spouse for child	39.0	52.8	40.3 (156)
Definitely want Vietnamese spouse for child	41.0	16.7	38.8 (150)
Column Total (N)	90.7 (351)	9.3 (36)	100.0 (387)

χ^2=11.67, p < .05

likely to report that their parents were definitely committed to seeing them marry someone Vietnamese.

This empirical evidence is, then, consistent with the argument offered above. The problem Vietnamese American students tend to be young men born or reared in the United States. This tallies with the finding of Matute-Bianchi (1986) that the Mexican-American students who were most likely to display behavioral problems were those who had been raised in the United States as members of a relatively underprivileged minority and did not show strong identification with Mexican ethnicity and were therefore marginal to both Mexican identity and to membership in the larger American society. It also tallies with the argument offered above, that young women are subject to greater social controls from the Vietnamese community, and therefore are more tightly bound to the system of ethnic relations and less likely to become marginal members than males are.

The evidence on families tends to support the argument that, since young people are connected to the ethnic group in part through their families, individuals may show relatively weak ties to the group because of an "incomplete" family system (incomplete, that is, in terms of the expectations of the community), or because of relatively weak ties between the family itself and the ethnic community. The ties between the family and the community are examined here as both structural and social-psychological in nature. Structurally, there is a significant association between membership or non-membership of parents in community organizations and problematic behavior on the part of adolescent children. From a social-psychological perspective, there appears to be a connection between parents' degree of commitment to endogamy and children's problematic behavior.

The argument I have presented thus far would suggest, in accordance with the "segmented assimilation" perspective, that involvement in the ethnic group can provide an alternative to the problematic behaviors

presented to young people in the relatively underprivileged segments of American society that surround the community. It has been pointed out above that race is an essential aspect of social stratification in New Orleans (as in many other parts of the United States), as a result of a heritage of racism and as a result of continuing institutional racism. Statistics on income distribution and the qualitative descriptions of life in the schools and in the community suggests that the young black people in this community suffer disproportionately from social problems associated with lack of socioeconomic privilege. Most of the contacts that Vietnamese young people have with other young people outside their own ethnic group are with this relatively underprivileged group.

Table 7.8 examines the ethnicity of friends of non-problem and problem Vietnamese American students. Very few respondents in either category reported that they had no Vietnamese friends. Over 90% of non-problem students and about 85% of problem students reported that half or more of their friends were Vietnamese. An overwhelming majority of young people in both categories reported that "most" or "almost all" of their friends were Vietnamese. But the problem students were more likely to report that "half" or "most" of their friends were Vietnamese, while the non-problem students were more likely to report that "almost all" their friends were Vietnamese.

Looking at responses to the question about how many black friends respondents had, it is clear that neither category reported having many black friends. Still the non-problem students were much more likely to report having no black friends than were the problem students and the problem students were more likely to report that "some" of their friends or more were black.

As we might expect, since there are so few white young people in this neighborhood or in the two major schools, neither category was likely to report having many white friends, and there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, it is notable

Table 7.8. Percentages of Reported Vietnamese, Black, and White Friends Among Non-problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Vietnamese friends		Black friends	
	Non-Problem	Problem	Non-Problem	Problem
None	.6	7.7	20.1	5.1
Very Few	4.4	5.1	45.7	33.3
Some	4.4	2.6	24.5	30.8
Half	9.4	15.4	6.1	17.9
Most	23.4	30.8	1.9	2.6
Almost all	57.9	38.5	1.7	10.3
Column Total	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)
	χ^2=19.20,	p < .01	χ^2=23.45,	p < .01

	White friends	
	Non-Problem	Problem
None	32.2	33.3
Very Few	54.0	61.5
Some	9.1	5.1
Half	2.5	0.0
Most	.8	0.0
Almost all	1.4	0.0
Column Total	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)
	χ^2=2.84,	p=.724

that the few respondents who did answer that half or more of their friends belonged to the socioeconomically privileged dominant racial group were all non-problem students.

It would seem that students who display high levels of problematic behavior are indeed less completely bound up in ethnic friendship networks, although their friends are primarily of their own ethnic group. This would support the observation I made above that the Vietnamese adolescents who are marginal to their own community are members of exclusively Vietnamese groups, but have extensive social contacts with the non-Vietnamese young people in the neighborhood and in the school.

Friendship groups are one measure of ethnic involvement. However, the concept also has other dimensions, which I have utilized above in looking at the question of whether this involvement promotes academic achievement. It is worth considering these dimensions to see if those who are less tightly integrated into the ethnic community are indeed more likely to engage in deviant behavior than are those who are constrained by community membership.

Table 7.9 shows levels of commitment to endogamy for non-problem and problem students. It is clear, comparing this with the results on parents' commitment to endogamy for children, that young people tend to report that their marrying within the group is more important to their parents than it is to themselves. It is also clear that both non-problem and problem students tend to prefer Vietnamese spouses to non-Vietnamese. But a clear majority (62%) of the problem students reported that it was "not important" to them whether they married someone who was Vietnamese or not, while only 32% of non-problem students said that the ethnicity of future spouses was unimportant. Moreover, while one out of every four non-problem students said that they "definitely wanted" to marry someone who was Vietnamese, only about 8% of the problem students gave this response. Problem behavior and ethnic identification show a similar relationship. The problem students were also less likely to show strong

Table 7.9. Commitment to Endogamy of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row Total (N)
Don't want Vietnamese spouse	1.3	7.7	1.7 (7)
Prefer non-Vietnamese spouse	.8	2.6	1.0 (4)
Not important	32.0	61.5	34.0 (140)
Prefer Vietnamese spouse	41.6	20.5	39.6 (159)
Definitely want Vietnamese spouse	24.5	7.7	22.9 (92)
Column Total (N)	90.7 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

$\chi^2=27.02$, $p < .01$

identification with the ethnic group through self-identification, as shown in 7.10 Although only a very tiny number of students described themselves as "American", rather than "Vietnamese American" or "Vietnamese", the problem students were more likely to choose the label of "American" than were the non-problem students. The problem students were also slightly more likely to describe themselves as "Vietnamese American." While two-thirds of the non-problem students described themselves unequivocally as "Vietnamese", only about 44% of the problem students had such an unequivocal sense of their own ethnic self-identification.

Language skills and language use are an essential part of involvement in an ethnic group. "In the Vietnamese community," Bankston and Zhou (1995) have written, "values and traditions constitute a source of motivation and direction as the families deal with adjustment problems in their new country. These cultural values and traditions are transmitted through the family with the help of the Vietnamese language" (p. 14). As I have discussed above, the outsiders or problem students are frequently described as having low abilities in Vietnamese and as communicating with one another in a melange of Vietnamese and English, heavily spiced with obscenities in both languages.

Table 7.11 offers evidence on the language skills of problem students, contrasted with the language skills of others. None of the respondents indicated that they had no speaking abilities in Vietnamese. However, one out of every four of the problem students replied that they could speak "only a little Vietnamese", compared to only 7% of the non-problem students. Also, about one out of every four problem students said that they spoke Vietnamese "very well", while well over half of the non-problem students said they could "very well". These speaking abilities are undoubtedly, of course, in part related to the fact that the problem students are much more likely to have been born or reared in the United States than the others are.

Table 7.10. Self-description of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Non-Problem	Problem	Row Total (N)
American	1.7	17.9	3.2 (13)
Vietnamese-American	32.5	38.5	33.1 (133)
Vietnamese	65.8	43.6	63.7 (256)
Column Total (N)	90.3 (363)	9.7 (39)	100.0 (402)

$\chi^2=32.03$, $p < .01$

Table 7.11. Vietnamese Speaking, Reading, and Writing Abilities of Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese Students.

	Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	Non-P	P	Non-P	P	Non-P	P
Not at all	0.0	0.0	8.5	28.2	11.0	33.3
A little	6.6	25.6	20.4	53.8	19.8	51.3
Fairly well	35.3	48.7	28.1	15.4	29.8	12.8
Very Well	58.1	25.6	43.0	2.6	39.4	2.6
	$\chi^2=23.58$, $p < .01$		$\chi^2=46.56$, $p < .01$		$\chi^2=45.44$, $p < .01$	

Similar patterns occur in reports of reading and writing abilities, although reading abilities are generally more limited than speaking abilities and writing abilities are the most limited. The majority of problem students reported that they could read Vietnamese and write Vietnamese "only a little". By contrast only one out of every five of the other students reported they could read Vietnamese "only a little" and also only about one out of every five of the other students reported that they could write Vietnamese "only a little". Perhaps the most striking contrast lies in the percentages that reported they could read Vietnamese "very well" or write it "very well". Under 3% of the problem students said they could read the language very well and under 3% of them said they could write it well, compared to 43% and 40%, respectively, of the other students.

Language proficiency is closely related to language use, but it is worth looking at how the problem students and the others compare in frequency of use of Vietnamese, as well as in proficiency. Therefore, Table 7.12 shows how often respondents reported speaking Vietnamese with friends, siblings, and parents. As a general pattern, all respondents tended to speak Vietnamese the least frequently with their friends, somewhat more frequently with siblings, and most frequently with parents. Among the most notable points in this table is the fact that such a tiny percentage of problem students (3%) report that they "always" speak Vietnamese with their friends, even though a majority of both problem and non-problem students report that they "sometimes" or "usually" speak Vietnamese with their friends. This would support the observation that the problem students, although basically Vietnamese-speaking, tend to rely on English in communicating with their peers than the other students do.

It is entirely understandable that both groups of students tend to use Vietnamese in speaking with their parents. As seen in the statistics on linguistic isolation in this neighborhood, given in the description

Table 7.12. Frequency of Speaking Vietnamese with Friends, Siblings, and Parents by Non-Problem and Problem Vietnamese American Students.

	Friends		Siblings		Parents	
	Non-P	P	Non-P	P	Non-P	P
Never	2.5	15.4	3.3	17.9	.8	2.6
Seldom	9.1	20.5	6.1	23.1	2.5	0.0
Sometimes	32.0	25.6	21.8	20.5	10.7	23.1
Usually	39.4	35.9	42.4	25.6	25.3	38.5
Always	17.1	2.6	26.4	12.8	60.6	35.9
	χ^2=25.52, $p < .01$		χ^2=34.26, $p < .01$		χ^2=12.49, $p < .05$	

of the community, the vast majority of households in the community use Vietnamese inside the home and many parents speak very little English. The chi-square statistic shows that the difference between the two groups of students is the least marked in frequency of speaking Vietnamese with parents. Still, the problem students speak Vietnamese with their parents less often than do the others. It would be interesting to learn from those who said they spoke Vietnamese with their parents only sometimes how often their parents actually understood them. Language use has been identified by many of my interviewees as major source of alienation of parents from children, and as one reason that parents are sometimes unable to exercise sufficient control over their children. On this point, 61% of the non-problem young people always speak to their parents in the parents' own language, while only 36% of the problem young people do so.

The picture that emerges from these statistics, then, is one of a group of young people, identified as problem students based on their use of alcohol, drugs, and experiences with the police, who show separation or alienation from their own ethnic community. They tend to be less connected to the ethnic community than their peers directly and less connected through their families. They are more likely than their peers to have social contacts with non-coethnics. Composed largely of young people who have lived most or all of their lives in the United States, this problem group appears less committed to their own ethnic group and less clear in their identification with it. Their abilities in the language of their parents are less highly developed than peers that would be generally considered better adjusted. They also tend to use the language of their parents and of adult society less often.

We can also approach the issue of describing the problem students in this community from the perspective of tastes and interests, utilizing the relevant questions in the survey that I distributed in the local schools. Looking at likes and dislikes expressed by respondents to the

survey can give us some idea of the activities and interests that characterize young people who engage in problematic behavior. For the sake of brevity, I have chosen to present zero-order correlations between the measure of participation in problematic behavior constructed by adding together drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and number of times stopped by the police and each of the activities and preferences about which respondents were questioned. Table 7.13 summarizes the results.

The interest that shows the strongest negative relationship with engaging in undesirable behavior is "traditional Vietnamese music." The more young people had abused drugs and alcohol and had been stopped by the police, the more they expressed a dislike for traditional Vietnamese music ($r = -.431$). This provides further support for the argument that the troubled young people in this community are those who are the most alienated from their own ethnic identities.

The next strongest negative correlation was with "helping around the house" ($r = -.425$). This would seem to show a certain estrangement from the family and from family responsibilities. It should be noted that the zero-order relationship between liking traditional music and liking helping around the house is quite strong ($r = .598$), bolstering the position that integration into the family and integration into the community are closely connected. After a taste for Vietnamese music and a positive attitude toward helping around the house, enjoyment of reading has the next strongest relationship with engagement in undesirable activities ($r = -.358$). This apparently indicates that the troubled students who are alienated from ethnic community and family are less likely to develop interests that lead to excellence in school. Moreover, the social climate immediately outside of the community is distinctly non-literary: the local American youth culture does not provide an atmosphere conducive to developing an interest in reading.

These interests are, of course, subject to changing styles. The negative relationship between a taste for long hair on boys and

Table 7.13. Zero-order Correlations of Degree of Problematic Behavior with Preferences and Interests.

	Problematic Behavior
Like traditional Vietnamese music	-.431**
Like to help around house	-.425**
Like to read	-.358**
Like long hair	-.307**
Like school clubs	-.269**
Like to play sports	.031
Like classical music	.071
Like watching T.V.	.124**
Like gold necklaces	.142**
Like country/western music	.154**
Like rock music	.174**
Like "hanging out"	.256**
Like pierced nose	.374**
Like rap music	.399**

** $p < .01$

problematic behavior (r = -.307) appears a little odd, but it may be a result of the vagaries of adolescent fashion. During the time that I was doing my fieldwork, very short hair or shaved heads became increasingly common among young men, particularly among those that seemed to be engaged in undesirable forms of behavior. One of the social workers in the community told me that the young men were imitating famous basketball players and other celebrities in taking up this fashion.

The composite of substance abuse and experiences with the police was also negatively related to a liking for participating in school clubs (r = -.269). The same sort of behavior that is associated with estrangement from ethnic community and family is also associated with non-participation in school activities. Here, it is worth mentioning that liking school clubs is positively related to liking traditional Vietnamese music (r = .266), liking helping around the house (r = .385), and liking reading (r = .402). School participation, an interest in Vietnamese cultural products, appreciation of family activities, and intellectual pursuits are interrelated with one another, as well as negatively related to destructive forms of behavior.

Looking, now, at the interests that are positively associated with the composite of substance abuse and being stopped by the police, we see that this variable has the strongest positive relationship with rap music. Rap music is a form of artistic expression that is deeply embedded in American youth culture and is an important means of communication of modern American youth. Although it is popularly associated with the minority youth who created, this type of music/poetry has captured a wide audience among young people of various races and social classes. Therefore, the taste for rap music shows that young people are connected to the lines of communication of American youth culture in general, and open to influences specifically from the non-Vietnamese in the immediate vicinity. Rap is not a Vietnamese art form. This liking for rap music, then, seems very revealing because it shows

that young people are open to channels of communication common to other Americans of their age group, and not enclosed in the channels of communication that connect them to their adult co-ethnics. This may be seen as related to undesirable forms of behavior in part because the non-Vietnamese American social groups that surround them exist in a relatively underprivileged segment of American society and suffer from a variety of social problems. Therefore, many of the influences these young Vietnamese Americans receive from their communication with those outside of their own group are troubling influences. At the same time, having lines of communication that are open to the outside means that the Vietnamese young people are not bound up in the closed social networks that create social capital (Zhou and Bankston, 1995).

A taste for jewelry in pierced noses is also significantly associated with problematic behavior among these Vietnamese American students ($r = .374$). Jewelry in various parts of the body is not a form of physical ornamentation practiced in Vietnamese culture, but it is a mode of self-expression that has been becoming increasingly popular among young Americans. Thus, this also may be seen as an indication of being part of American youth culture, rather than part of a closed ethnic community.

Those who reported engaging in higher levels of problematic behavior were also more likely to report more fondness for "hanging out" ($r = .256$) This is hardly surprising, considering that "hanging out" has been described as a popular pastime among deviant youth (Willoughby, 1993). Also, "hanging out" in public places on the part of teenagers is conducive to using drugs and alcohol, and also puts one at risk of attracting the attention of the police.

A fondness for gold necklaces is rather weakly related tc engaging in problematic behavior ($r = .142$). Even though gold necklaces and other forms of conspicuous display are part of contemporary American youth culture, this kind of ornamentation is popular among various Vietnamese

teenagers. Similarly, a liking for television watching shows only a small zero-order relationship with engaging in undesirable activities (r = .124), since TV is a favorite activity among a large number of young people.

The troubled young people, then, are characterized by aversion to traditional Vietnamese music, helping with housework, and reading, and by an attraction to activities and means of self-expression associated with American youth culture, specifically, rap music, faddish bodily ornamentation, and "hanging out." The troubled young people show relatively fewer connections to their elders and their families, and relatively more connections to an age-segregated American youth culture.

The *Dung Lac* Program: Addressing the Problems of Outsiders

The *Dung Lac* program, which I have mentioned above, is a youth services program, aimed at improving the adaptation of Vietnamese American youth in New Orleans East by providing them with greater ties to their own community and thereby enabling them to gain access to its social supports and to have their behavior guided by its constraints. Created by a Catholic priest in the area, its initial goal was to involve marginal young people in recreation and community service projects that would enable them to use their time constructively and lessen their alienation from the neighborhood adult society.

In the Spring of 1994, this project was revived by a social worker employed by Associated Catholic Charities. This social worker, and his superiors, envisioned the project as taking place in two stages: first, the young people who were at risk would be provided with afternoon sports activities in order to keep them off the streets and draw them into the program; second, these young people would be gradually induced to participate in "life-planning" classes that would encourage them to examine issues such as sexuality, substance abuse, and career planning in order to provide a basis for coming to constructive decisions about their futures.

Throughout the summer of 1994, I helped at afternoon basketball games for these young people. However, as of the Spring of 1995, the "life-planning" courses had still not been developed, in large part because the young people were simply not interested in sitting down in classrooms and seriously examining their lives. However, Tony Tran, the social worker involved with this project, found that he was achieving some successes in ways that were not a part of the initial plan.

One of the areas of success has been getting young people to participate in ceremonial events. This has not only apparently increased their own sense of identification with the ethnic group, it has led the older people who previously rejected them to accord them a measure of acceptance. The most important ceremonies in the community are those surrounding the *Tet*, or New Year's Festival. A central part of these festivities is the "Dragon Dance," in which young men, dressed in the costume of a dragon and of other mythical figures, dance through the streets to the accompaniment of fireworks and clashing drums and cymbals.

"I was amazed to see how wrapped up the young people became in learning the dance and making their costumes and making preparations," Tran told me.

By the day of the festival, the youths in the *Dung Lac* program had come up with an elaborately-made dragon and other costumes, and had mastered the traditional dances.

"When I saw them, it surprised me," said one man, "I thought, these really are Vietnamese kids after all." Tran remarked afterward that a number of adults had expressed gratified amazement that young people who had been seen as completely outside the Vietnamese community could play such a central part in the festivities. "I think it really made the young people look at themselves differently," Tran told me, "and I think it will make it a lot easier in the future to get support from the adults."

The second are in which the *Dung Lac* program has been successful has been in increasing community constraints on behavior by creating a

sort of "neighborhood watch" overseeing the behavior of young people. We have seen that productive behavior patterns of young people depend not just on individual families, but on ties among families that reinforce one another. By late Fall of 1994, Tran had decided that just providing afternoon sports was insufficient to control behavior. "They had too much free time," he said, "I couldn't give them enough basketball games to keep them busy all the time."

In order to provide full-time oversight, Tran began compiling lists of the names of problem adolescents in the community. Utilizing the addresses provided by Associated Catholic Charities, which maintains records on all individuals who have arrived as refugees, he began calling parents of young people. He made sure that parents knew who their children's friends were and that they had the addresses and telephone numbers of parents of their children's friends. Then, he encouraged them to maintain frequent contact with all the parents of their children's friends in order to keep track of where adolescent children were and what they were doing at all times.

This may seem a bit Orwellian, but it is a logical extension of the argument that the behavior of young people can be controlled by interlocking ties within the community that channel their behavior into non-destructive, if not constructive, forms of behavior. It also seems to have been effective. "Things have been much quieter since I started with this approach," Tran asserts, "the young people know that they can't keep their parents in the dark and they can't get away with much." In increasing the constraints around young people by tightening already existing community ties, the youth project seems to be providing social controls along with the social supports provided by getting problem adolescents more involved in community rituals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has offered a detailed description of the adolescent "outsiders" in the Vietnamese community. Contrary to the expectations

of traditional assimilation theory, this description suggests that those who are "outsiders" from the perspective of the larger American society are also "outsiders" from the perspective of the community. It has been argued here that the young people who fail to fit in to the ethnic community are often those who have not been integrated into the community system by their families, those who have learned "deviant" or disapproved behavior from coethnic or non-coethnic peers, and those who have been labeled as "bad kids" by adult coethnics. One important implication is that behavior that would generally be seen as desirable both by adult Vietnamese Americans and by the dominant society may be promoted by integrating these young people into the ethnic community system.

The qualitative description of the "deviant" young people has been supported by evidence from the survey distributed to Vietnamese students in the local schools. These data have provided evidence that the problem youth tend to be young men, born or raised in the United States, whose families have relatively few organizational connections to and commitment to the ethnic community, and who themselves tend to show low levels of ethnic community involvement. The evidence supports the argument that problem young people are relatively less linked than non-problem young people to the society of adult coethnics and relatively more assimilated to an American youth culture. One youth program that has connecting young people to the local ethnic community as its goal has been described.

Part III. The Outcome: Ethnic Involvement and Academic Achievement

Chapter 8. Ethnic Involvement and Academic Achievement

Characteristics of Ethnic Community Involvement

The fundamental argument of this dissertation is that membership in an immigrant minority group can promote, rather than inhibit the adaptation of young people to the mainstream society. "Adaptation" is here seen primarily as "doing well in school." If this is the case, we should expect that young people who are more involved in an ethnic community should show higher levels of performance than those who are less involved in that community.

In order to use the data from the survey that I administered to Vietnamese high school students, it is first necessary to define "involvement in an ethnic community" in terms that may be operationalized using this data. On this note, we can consider the five worldwide characteristics of minorities suggested by anthropologists Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris: minority groups receive unequal treatment, they are easily identifiable by physical or cultural characteristics, members feel a sense of peoplehood, membership is ascribed, and group members practice endogamy (Wagley and Harris, 1964). Unequal treatment is involuntary and externally imposed on group members. Ascribed membership is also involuntarily imposed and could not be used as a measure of the degree to which members are involved in the group. Similarly, physical traits identify one to those inside and outside of the group, regardless of the extent to which one has assimilated into the larger society.

Among the cultural characteristics over which individuals have some control, language occupies a particularly important place. Commitment to endogamy is, of course, essential to perpetuating an ethnic group. The "sense of peoplehood" necessitates taking into consideration the element of subjective identification. In the context of retaining a separate ethnic identity versus assimilating into the larger American society, it is important to look at to what to extent Vietnamese American young people retain a sense of minority group membership as a primary

source of identification, to what extent they identify with both Vietnamese and American culture, and to what extent they identify completely with the larger society.

The characteristics of language use, commitment to endogamy, and self-description can help to tell us how "Vietnamese" a Vietnamese American young person is. However, it should be understood clearly that this dissertation is not concerned simply with ethnicity, but more precisely with membership in a particular ethnic community, as a concrete social group. Therefore, I want to look at indicators of extent of participation in the system of social ties within this social group. Two chief indicators of participation in the system of social ties are the extent to which individuals have social ties within this group and the extent to which individuals are active in institutions, activities, or interests that bring group members together. I have argued above that the religious institution provides such a center or focus for the Vietnamese of New Orleans East.

Table 8.1 provides frequencies for the various measures of language use and ability, commitment to endogamy, self-description, proportion of friends that are Vietnamese, and religious participation. In the following sections, I will discuss each of these aspects of ethnic community involvement.

Language Use and Ability:

In the interviews that I conducted with members of the community, abandonment of Vietnamese in favor of English was consistently characterized as the primary identifying characteristic of "Americanized" young people. As I have discussed above, many of the types of social relations that are looked upon as "Vietnamese" simply cannot be readily expressed in English. Those who have some familiarity with linguistics will recognize in this observation a version of the famous "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," the view that different languages impose different patterns of thinking on individuals (Crystal, 1987: 15). In particular, the

Table 8.1. Percentages and Frequencies of Indicators of Ethnic Community Involvement.

	%	N
Speak Vietnamese with friends		
Never	3.7	15
Seldom	10.2	41
Sometimes	31.3	126
Usually	39.1	157
Always	15.7	63
Speak Vietnamese with parents		
Never	1.0	4
Seldom	2.2	9
Sometimes	11.8	48
Usually	26.6	107
Always	58.2	234
Speak Vietnamese with siblings		
Never	4.7	19
Seldom	7.7	31
Sometimes	21.6	87
Usually	40.8	164
Always	25.1	101

(Table con'd)

	%	N
Vietnamese reading ability		
Read not at all	10.4	42
Read a little	23.6	95
Read fairly well	26.9	108
Read very well	39.1	157
Vietnamese writing ability		
Write not at all	13.2	53
Write a little	22.9	92
Write fairly well	28.1	113
Write very well	35.8	144
Vietnamese speaking ability		
Speak not all	0.0	0
Speak a little	8.5	34
Speak fairly well	36.6	147
Speak very well	55.0	221
Commitment to Endogamy		
Definitely want non-Vietnamese spouse	1.7	7
Prefer non-Vietnamese spouse	1.0	4
Don't care about ethnicity	34.8	140
Prefer Vietnamese spouse	39.6	159
Definitely want Vietnamese spouse	22.9	92

(Table con'd)

	%	N
Self-description		
American	3.2	13
Vietnamese-American	33.1	133
Vietnamese	63.7	256
Proportion of friends Vietnamese		
None	1.2	5
Very few	4.5	18
Some	4.2	17
About half	10.0	40
Most	24.1	97
Almost all or all	56.0	225
Frequency of church/temple attendance		
Never	4.3	17
Once a year	3.3	13
several times a year	6.6	26
once a month	5.6	22
once a week	37.7	149
more than once a week	42.5	168

patterns of thinking about social statuses that people in the Vietnamese community regard as distinguishing them from the majority society (see the discussion of "status pronouns" in Vietnamese in Bankston, 1994; and Bankston, forthcoming) are embedded in their language.

In addition to influencing the kinds of social relations that can be expressed within a group, language is also a powerful symbol of group membership. Language, it has been observed, has been seen as "the primary outward sign of a group's identity," so that "to choose one language over another provides an immediate and universally recognized badge of identity" (Crystal, 1987: 34).

Language is more than a symbol, though, it is also the chief means of communication among humans. The more one uses a language that is specific to one group of people, then, the more one's communication is limited to that group. Those who rely exclusively or chiefly on Vietnamese as their language of everyday communication may be safely assumed to be communicating exclusively or chiefly with Vietnamese people. The instrument that I use contains several survey items regarding frequency of use of Vietnamese in three social situations: frequency of use of Vietnamese with friends, frequency of use of the language with siblings, and frequency of use of the language with parents.

Frequency of use of a language is, of course, closely related to abilities in a language. Reading and writing abilities, however, are not simply acquired in the process of living around other group members, but necessitate some active attempt to master these skills in a particular language (Bankston and Zhou, 1994). Thus, all language skills, but especially such language skills as literacy, indicate intensive involvement in an ethnic group. Language skills represent effort put into developing abilities associated with group membership, as well as time spent with group members. This does not mean monolingualism, however. In Table 8.1, we see that use of the Vietnamese language within

peer groups is common among the young people in this neighborhood, but that they do not tend to be monolingual in their dealings with their friends. Only about 4% said that they "never" spoke Vietnamese with their friends, but one out of every day said that they "seldom" spoke Vietnamese with their friends. The modal category for Vietnamese language use with friends is "usually."

It is not surprising that these young people speak Vietnamese to their parents more often than to their friends. Many of them *must* speak Vietnamese with parents: we have seen that many of these students come from linguistically isolated households, and even many of the parents who speak English well speak Vietnamese much better. A clear majority (58%) say that they "always" speak Vietnamese with their parents and more than a fourth (27%) say that they "usually" speak Vietnamese with their parents.

Vietnamese use with siblings is somewhat greater than use with friends and somewhat less than use with parents. Vietnamese use appears to be slightly heavier in the home than out of it, and it appears to be slightly less frequent in speaking with other young people than in speaking with adults.

Most of the respondents can read Vietnamese, but there is variation in reports of this skill. One out of every ten said that they could not read the language at all. Only about four out of every ten said that they could read it very well. Writing abilities are slightly lower than reading abilities. This should be expected, of course, since reading is a more passive skill than writing (remember that Charlemagne is said to have managed to learn to read a little - an impressive accomplishment for a Frankish king - but never made much progress at the art of writing). For both reading and writing, the modal category is "very well."

The ability to speak Vietnamese, at some level, is universal among these young people. None of them said that they were unable to speak it, and only 9% said that they could only speak "a little." Over half said

that they could speak the language "very well." Over 90% said they could speak Vietnamese "fairly well" or "very well." In sum, then, use of the Vietnamese language is common among young people of this community, but most common with parents and least common with friends. All of them speak some Vietnamese and most of them speak it well. Reading and writing abilities are somewhat lower, but the ability to read and write Vietnamese at least fairly well, a language with an alphabet that is based on the Roman alphabet but markedly different from it (see Bankston, 1994, for a succinct discussion of the Vietnamese writing system), is found among a majority of the young people in this immigrant community.

Commitment to Endogamy:

Gordon (1964) portrays intermarriage as part of the ultimate stage of assimilation. When members of a minority group intermarry readily and frequently with a surrounding majority, the minority will be completely swallowed up by the majority group. A commitment to in-group marriage is not simply a desire to maintain a physically distinctive set of people. Nor is it only the desire to perpetuate traditional ceremonies and rituals, although ceremonies and rituals can be valued symbols of ethnic identity. It is the wish to maintain a style of family life that lies at the very core of the sense of peoplehood. Kibria (1993: 165) found that the young Vietnamese Americans she interviewed saw forming Vietnamese families as essential to remaining Vietnamese:

> Families in the United States were invariably described in negative terms, as entities that were marked by selfish, distant, uncaring relations among members. My young adult informants spoke of how Vietnamese families, in contrast, were cooperative and caring groups in which members were willing to sacrifice for one another. The desire to marry within ethnic boundaries arose in part from a sense that intermarriage threatened the possibility of maintaining such cooperative and caring family relations in the United States.

Kibria's findings about attitudes toward family seem to me correct. My own interviews have suggested that those who are willing to marry outside of ethnic boundaries are less interested in maintaining the types of family relations that are usually identified as characteristically

Vietnamese. Instead of seeing others in terms of a system of relations defined by the group, those with little commitment to in-marriage tend to have adopted the perspective on marriage that they, and most Americans, would identify as an "American" view: that marriage is a union of two individuals, based only on the preference of those individuals. "What do I care about marrying someone Vietnamese and Vietnamese traditions and that kinda stuff?" One young man remarked to me. "This is America, not Vietnam, and I guess if I love somebody, that's all that matters."

Among the respondents to my survey, there were very few who completely rejected marriage with other Vietnamese. Just under 2% said that they did not want a Vietnamese spouse and only 1% said they preferred a non-Vietnamese spouse. However, for many, the commitment to in-group marriage was not strong. Over 1/3 said that they did not care whether they married someone Vietnamese or not. It should be noted that most of the young people that I talked with who said that they did not care whether or not they married a Vietnamese or not said that they probably would marry within the group anyway. Those who said that they preferred to marry someone Vietnamese were in the modal category (40%). Thus, even though only 23% said that they "definitely" wanted to marry within the ethnic group, a clear majority at least preferred to marry within.

Ethnic Self-Description:

Names are central to identification with an ethnicity (Kivisto, 1995: 18). Whether one sees oneself as "American" or "Asian American" or "Vietnamese" reflects the part played by ethnicity in the creation of a sense of self. One of my interviewees once observed, "for a long time, I did not know who I was. I felt like an American, but everytime I looked in the mirror, I saw an Asian face looking back at me. Finally, I decided, 'I am Vietnamese' and then I felt I knew who I was." For this individual, being able to describe himself in ethnic terms was critical

to his self-image. Similarly, one of the students that I taught during my fieldwork told me one day, "my parents always want me to follow Vietnamese traditions. But I don't want to - I'm an American." The label one chooses sums up how one feels one stands in relation to one's own community and in relation to the larger society.

Very few (3 %) of the respondents in my survey identified themselves as "American." But fully a third chose the label "Vietnamese American" (one person wrote in "Asian American" and has been included with those who described themselves as "Vietnamese American"). The majority (64%) chose the self-description "Vietnamese." In terms of self-description, then, there is some variation in psychological involvement with the ethnic group, but self-description is a rather weak measure of differences in ethnic identification on the part of Vietnamese American adolescents.

Ethnicity of Friends:

An ethnic community is not just an abstract sense of group identification. It is a social group, a distinctive set of people. For Gordon (1964), "structural" assimilation was a matter of entering into the primary and secondary group associations of the larger society. Structural assimilation may be seen in institutional terms, as becoming part of the institutional structures (workplaces, clubs, etc.) of a dominant society. But we can also see it in more informal terms, as forming associations such as friendships with members of a larger society. If we see an ethnic group in network terms, as a set of social ties bounded by ethnic group membership, then the extent to which one is involved in or integrated into the group may be seen as the extent to which all of one's social ties are within the group.

Simply ascertaining the proportion of a young person's social ties that are with other Vietnamese people is not, by itself, an ideal measure of ethnic group involvement. Roberts and Starr (1989) have noted that assimilation, for the Vietnamese and other members of the newest

immigrant groups, may not necessarily mean absorption by any native segment of American society, but association with "Americanized" reference groups among their own coethnics. As one of many indicators of ethnic group involvement, however, the ethnicity of friends can at least provide some information on how few friendships group members have with other groups. Combined with the other measures, then, this should be seen as a useful, if rather weak, indicator.

A majority (56.0%) of the respondents reported that "all or almost all" of their friends were Vietnamese. Another 24% said that "most" of their friends were Vietnamese. However, there is some variation in responses to the item, since 20% reported that half or fewer of their friends were Vietnamese. It makes sense to argue that young people half or fewer of whose friends are Vietnamese tend to be less wrapped up in the ethnic group than those with completely Vietnamese social circles.

Religious Participation:

Following Durkheim, sociologists of religion have generally argued that religions are key sources of group identity, motivation, and social control (Luhman, 1994: 491; see also Bellah, 1970:11-12). Research on new ethnic and immigrant congregations continues to support the view that religious activities reinforce the ethnicity of participants and bind them more closely to the ethnic group (Choy, 1979; Haddad and Lummis 1987; Hurh and Kim 1990; Kivisto 1993; Warner 1993; Williams 1988). Sociologists and anthropologists who have studied Vietnamese American communities have found that religious institutions play a particularly important part in maintaining a Vietnamese identity in the United States, and that Vietnamese communities exercise much of their social control over individuals through the medium of religious institutions (Nash, 1992; Rutledge, 1985). Both Catholicism and Buddhism have been described as central to the maintenance of ethnic identification on the part of Vietnamese Americans (Rutledge, 1985), and Vietnamese Catholicism has been described as a kind of "Confucianized" Christianity, Christian in

its beliefs, but Vietnamese in its symbols, rituals, and other forms of expression (Nash, 1992).

I have, above, described the centrality of the religious institution in the lives of Vietnamese people in this community. In this heavily Catholic neighborhood, the church serves as a community center, a place for holding meetings of local ethnic organizations, and a place for exchanging news and gossip about neighbors. For the few Buddhists in the neighborhood, the temple on the West Bank of New Orleans serves much the same function and much of the cooperation between Catholics and Buddhists takes place through the working together of Catholic priests and Buddhist monks.

As shown in Table 8.1, most of the variation in religious attendance is between those who attend only one time per week and those who attend more than one time per week. About 43% of these young people report attending more than once a week and 38% report attending only once per week. Still, about 20% do say that they attend their church or temple once a month or less.

Interrelationships Among Characteristics

In order to show that involvement in this ethnic group can promote, rather than inhibit the social adaptation of group members, it is necessary to establish that these indicators of involvement are positively related to each other (in order to maintain that they may, in fact, be seen as indicators of a single underlying dimension) and that they are related to academic achievement.

Table 8.2 presents zero-order relations among the items that have been identified as characteristics of ethnic community involvement and with averaged reported grades, time spent on homework, and perceived importance of college.

The first three indicators of ethnic involvement are frequency of speaking Vietnamese with friends, frequency of speaking Vietnamese with parents, and frequency of speaking Vietnamese with parents. All three

Table 8.2. Zero-Order Correlations of Indicators of Ethnic Community Involvement, Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perception of Importance of College.

	Viet. with friends	Viet. with parents	Viet. with sibs	Reading ability
Speaking Viet. with parents	.461**			
Speaking Viet. with sibs	.750**	.601**		
Viet. reading ability	.592**	.332**	.566**	
Viet. writing ability	.588**	.317**	.560**	.945**
Viet. speaking ability	.585**	.430**	.599**	.631**
Commitment to endogamy	.372**	.315**	.318**	.317**
Self-description	.462**	.321**	.451**	.368**
Proportion of Viet. friends	.232**	.227**	.198**	.110*
Religious attendance	.350**	.226**	.311**	.370**
Average grade	.378**	.301**	.428**	.461**
Time on homework	.306**	.238**	.361**	.443**
Perception of import. of college	.257**	.187**	.278**	.271**

(Table con'd)

	Writing ability	Speaking ability	Endogamy	Self-des.
Speaking ability	.611**			
Commitment to endogamy	.326**	.385**		
Self-description	.365**	.405**	.339**	
Proportion of Viet. friends	.069	.216**	.230**	
Religious attendance	.343**	.226**	.286**	.240**
Average grade	.436**	.376**	.311**	.353**
Time on homework	.443**	.313**	.293**	.288**
Perception of import. of college	.271**	.431**	.225**	.250**

	Proportion of Vietnamese friends	Religious Attendance
Religious attendance	.297**	
Average grade	.285**	.412**
Time on homework	.174**	.313**
Perception of import. of college	.202**	.431**

	Average grade	Time on homework
Time on homework	.527**	
Importance of college	.508**	.434**

* p < .05
** p < .01

of these are strongly and positively related, with the strongest correlation between how often respondents speak Vietnamese with siblings and how often they speak Vietnamese with friends. It is understandable that these two would be more strongly related than frequency of language use with parents is with language use with friends, since friends and siblings are, roughly speaking, peers of the respondents. Also, it is understandable that language use with parents should be more closely related to language use with siblings than to language use with friends, since speaking Vietnamese with parents and siblings represents language use inside the home.

These three measures of frequency of language use are, as we should expect, significantly and positively related to reading, writing, and speaking abilities in Vietnamese. It is notable that frequency of using Vietnamese with parents is the language usage variable that is least strongly related to abilities. This is probably because, as noted above, speaking Vietnamese with parents is so common among these young people that it is a very weak indicator of frequency of language use.

Vietnamese reading and writing abilities are so highly correlated as to be virtually the same thing. Speaking ability is strongly related to these two, but not as strongly, of course, since many people who speak a language well do not read or write it. Commitment to marrying within the Vietnamese group is not as highly related to the language use and ability items as the latter are to one another, but there is a significant relationship in the expected direction.

Self-description as Vietnamese shows a fairly strong and consistently significant positive relationship to all the other indicators. Of all these indicators, proportion of friends who are Vietnamese is the most weakly related to others. We should expect this, since, as I have discussed above, "Americanized" Vietnamese tend to have high proportions of Vietnamese friends, albeit "Americanized" friends. Religious attendance, throughout, shows significant and fairly strong

relationships with all of the indicators of ethnic involvement. This offers additional support, beyond the observations of the role of religion in the community, for taking religious participation as itself an indicator of involvement in the ethnic community. Since these items are interrelated, it may be argued that their overlap is a result of some factor that they all hold in common. I am suggesting, for the theoretical reasons that I have discussed above, that this factor is what I have called "involvement in the ethnic community."

Is this involvement associated with scholastic performance? The zero-order correlations in this table would certainly suggest so. Averaged grades, composed of the past and present grades reported by students on the questionnaire added together and averaged to create an overall 0 to 4.0 index, show significant positive correlations with all of the indicators. The relationship is strongest for Vietnamese reading ability ($r = .461$), Vietnamese writing ability ($r = .436$). This makes sense in terms of my general thesis, since, as I have argued elsewhere (Bankston and Zhou, 1995) reading and writing abilities are skills that must be intentionally cultivated with the assistance of other ethnic community members and therefore represent very high levels of involvement. Proportion of friends who are Vietnamese shows the weakest relationship to averaged grades ($r = .285$). This is also consistent with the general thesis, since, as I have suggested above, simply having Vietnamese friends is, in a sense, the lowest level of ethnic involvement.

In addition to grades, there are two survey items that are closely related to academic achievement. Time spent on homework is a measure of effort that should lead to achievement. Perceptions of the importance of attending college, as a measure of the intent to pursue continuing education, may lead students to work harder on their schoolwork and do better. Alternatively, doing well in school may enhance one's confidence in one's abilities and lead one to make plans for future education. In

either case, placing value on future education may be expected to be intimately related to scholastic performance.

Time spent on homework is, as expected, very strongly related to averaged reported grades received. It is also positively related to all of the indicators of ethnic involvement. Once again, we see that reading and writing abilities, which I suggest represent a very high degree of involvement in an ethnic community, are the most strongly related to time spent on homework, while proportion of friends who are Vietnamese is the most weakly related. Seeing college as important is strongly associated with both averaged grades and time spent on homework and, again, it is related to all of the indicators of ethnic community involvement.

We see, then, that the individual indicators of ethnic involvement are all significantly related to how well young people do in school, how much time they put into their homework, and how important they feel it is to go on to college. However, the argument is not simply that being able to read Vietnamese is connected to doing well in school or that having Vietnamese friends is connected to doing well in school. The argument is that all of these indicators are manifestations of the extent to which individuals are wrapped up in the ethnic group. I am concerned, in other words, with the factor that underlies all of these indicators. Perhaps the simplest and most straightforward way to evoke this factor is to add together all of the indicators. Those who have very low scores on all of the indicators may be assumed to have very low involvement in the community. Those who have very high scores on all of the indicators may be assumed to have very high involvement in the ethnic community.

In order to get an index of ethnic community involvement, I add the frequency of language usage, language ability, commitment to endogamy, proportion of Vietnamese friends, and self-description variables together. This yields an index that ranges in theory from 0 to 34. In actuality, the lowest score on this index is 6. There may be some methodological questions about combining the items in this fashion to

create an index. Since the survey items have different ranges and different standard deviations, methodological purists might complain that this gives undue weight to the items with greater standard deviations.

There are two other approaches, somewhat less straightforward in interpretation, to creating an index. First, to get rid of the problem of different ranges in the values of items, survey items may be standardized (converted to Z-scores) by subtracting the mean of each item from the responses to that item and then dividing the remainder by the standard deviation. The resulting Z-scores can then be added together. Second, one may use factor analysis to generate a factor score, which represents the variation that all of the indicators hold in common (i.e., the common, underlying factor). I have employed both of these two approaches, in addition to the simple approach to creating an index, to see if the method used to create the index makes a difference in the relation between the composite measure of ethnic involvement and academic achievement and related items.

To look at the relationship between this composite measure of ethnic involvement and academic achievement, I have regressed scholastic performance (as measured by grades) and the related items of time spent on homework and perceived importance of college on the simple index of ethnic involvement, on an index of ethnic involvement created by adding together Z-scores of the indicators, and on a factor score created from the indicators by factor analysis. Table 8.3 presents the results.

In the first part of this table, the simple additive measure of ethnic involvement is more strongly related to averaged grades received than is any of the individual indicators. The standardized coefficient, which is the same as r for the bivariate relationship, is .568. It therefore explains, by itself, about 32% of the variance in grades, which is a very high R-square for a bivariate relationship with individual-level data. The composite measure also explains about 22% of the variance in time spent on homework and about 16% of the variance in

Table 8.3. Standardized Coefficients and Coefficients of Determination of Regression of Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perception of Importance of College on Indices of Ethnic Community Involvement.

Unstandardized Index		
Dependent Variable	ß	R^2
Average Grades	.568**	.322
Time spent on Homework	.473**	.224
Perceived Importance of College	.402**	.162
Standardized Index		
Dependent Variable	ß	R^2
Average Grades	.559**	.312
Time spent on Homework	.467**	.219
Perceived Importance of College	.387**	.150
Factor Score		
Dependent Variable	ß	R^2
Average Grades	.552**	.305
Time spent on Homework	.449**	.201
Perceived Importance of College	.417**	.174

** $p < .01$

perceived importance of college attendance. In short, not only is ethnic community involvement related to academic achievement and related issues, it explains quite a bit of Vietnamese students' level of schoolwork and the composite measure created by combining all of the indicators provides a better predictor of school performance and related issues than does amy individual indicator.

Looking at the standardized index of ethnic involvement, created by adding together the Z-scores for the various indicators, the regression coefficients and the coefficients of determination are a tiny bit lower, but for all practical purposes the results are the same. Similarly, moving down to the rows that show coefficients produced when we regress the dependent variables on the factor score of ethnic involvement, coefficients are essentially the same.

Because the simple composite measure of ethnic involvement produces practically the same results as measures created by adding Z-scores and by factor analysis, it would appear that the different ranges and standard deviations of the variables that make up the simple composite measure do not present a problem. Therefore, I will henceforth use the simple additive index of ethnic involvement.

There is, then, a strong and positive relationship between the involvement of Vietnamese American students in their ethnic community and their school performance. In the next chapter, I will attempt to address the more complicated issue of why this relationship exists.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the theoretical reasons for regarding language use and ability, commitment to endogamy, ethnic self-description, ethnicity of friendship circles, and religious participation as indicators of extent of ethnic community involvement and it has discussed the responses of Vietnamese American students to the relevant survey items. It has demonstrated that these indicators are significantly interrelated and has argued that they are interrelated

because they share a common, underlying factor, which I maintain can be described as ethnic community involvement. The indicators also show significant zero-order correlations with scholastic performance (as measured by grades) and with the related phenomena of time spent on homework and perceived importance of college attendance. Bivariate regression shows that a composite measure of ethnic community involvement is a powerful predictor of academic achievement on the part of Vietnamese American young people. The results obtained by simply adding up the indicators to produce this composite measure are essentially the same as results produced by adding Z-scores or by using factor analysis to generate a factor score.

Chapter 9. The Influence of Ethnic Community Involvement

It has now been demonstrated that there is a strong connection between involvement in the ethnic community on the part of young people and achievement in school. The next question to be addressed, and it is a much more complicated question, is *why* this connection exists. I have suggested above that a community can influence its young people by providing them with supports and constraints. Supports can include formal programs aimed at facilitating academic achievement, expressions of encouragement and appreciation of scholastic success, and the fostering of relations among young people that lead to high levels of performance. Constraints may include discouraging young people from engaging in forms of behavior likely to detract from achievement and discouraging young people from association with social groups that engage in behavior likely to detract from achievement.

I have argued that any ethnic group can provide resources to its young, by using social relations within the group to generate support and encouragement for the young. However, I have maintained, following the segmented assimilation argument, that ethnic group membership is particularly important for young people in those ethnic groups that find themselves in disadvantaged and troubled segments of American society. This means that, while a group in a disadvantaged segment may make positive contributions to the advancement of its young, one of the most valuable ways in which a group can help its young is by offering an alternative to the troubled segment of American society that surrounds the immigrant group.

In the description of the Vietnamese community that I have offered we have seen that young people live in a poor neighborhood and go to schools that are plagued by a variety of problems. We have also seen, from the qualitative description, that the community contributes to the school performance of young people by providing them with programs such as after-school classes, by recognizing and encouraging excellence, and

by fostering cooperative relationships. We have also seen that those who are deeply enmeshed in the ethnic system of social relations are less likely to engage in problematic forms of behavior associated with living in an economically disadvantaged community.

It would not be possible to quantitatively examine all of the ways in which an ethnic community influences the behavior of its young. The influences are simply too complex and numerous. Nevertheless, the survey that I distributed among young people did contain some unavoidably imperfect measures of these influences. I would like now to look first at how these expected influences on academic achievement and related matters are associated with ethnic involvement. Then, I would like to examine how well these influences can predict scholastic outcomes, and to look at how much of the relationship between the influences and the outcomes can be attributed to ethnic community involvement.

The expected influences on academic performance that I have been able to consider include participation in formal programs aimed at improving performance in schools (after-school classes), exposure to community programs directed toward encouraging performance in schools (attendance at the yearly awards programs for honor students), cooperation among siblings on schoolwork, behavior likely to lead to poor school performance, and association with peers who engage in behavior likely to lead to poor school performance. Before looking at relationships among these items, and between these items and ethnic community involvement and school outcomes, I would like to briefly describe each expected influence, shown in Table 9.1.

Participation in After-School Classes

I have described the after-school class program in some detail above. As I have mentioned, this is a resource that the Vietnamese community makes available to its young people by mobilizing money and personnel on the basis of ethnic cooperation. It also appears to be a resource that is fairly widely utilized. A majority of the young people

Table 9.1 Percentages and Frequencies of Expected Influences on School Performance.

	%	N
Have attended Vietnamese classes	50.5	200
Have attended English classes	26.5	105
Have attended other classes	29.0	113
Have attended any afterschool class	66.9	269
Have attended awards ceremony	47.8	154
Have attended twice or more	36.9	119
How often older siblings help with schoolwork:		
never	32.0	103
sometimes	54.3	175
often	9.0	29
always	4.7	15
How often helps younger siblings with schoolwork:		
never	13.7	46
sometimes	52.1	175
often	24.4	82
always	9.0	33
How many times stopped by police:		
never	77.9	313
once	6.5	26
two or three times	2.7	11
four or five times	5.7	23
more than five times	7.2	29

(Table con'd)

	%	N
How many times drunk:		
never	77.4	311
once	4.2	17
two or three times	3.0	12
four or five times	0.7	3
more than five times	14.7	59
How many times used drugs:		
never	89.3	359
once	0.5	2
two or three times	1.0	4
four or five times	0.5	2
more than five times	8.7	35
How many friends have been stopped by police:		
none	59.5	239
one	5.0	20
two or three	5.7	23
four or five	19.9	80
more than five	10.0	40
How many friends have been drunk:		
none	62.4	251
one	1.7	7
two or three	4.2	17
four or five	18.4	74
more than five	13.2	53

(50.1%) reported that they had attended Vietnamese classes after school. While it is true that Vietnamese is not one of the subjects taught or tested in New Orleans public schools, it is reasonable to expect that the intellectual training and habits developed in Vietnamese language classes will carry over to other subjects.

English is a class that is taught in New Orleans schools, and it is a subject with which many of these Vietnamese American young people can use extra help. Over a quarter of them (27%) have taken after-school classes in English. 29% of students reported that they had studied other subjects after school. Altogether, about two-thirds of all students in the survey who responded to this item had studied at least one subject outside of the regular school day.

Attendance at the Awards Ceremony

It is difficult to measure many of the ways in which members of this community encourage school performance on the part of their young people. But one rather formal expression of encouragement is the annual awards ceremony at which high-achieving students are honored (see above). Attendance at this ceremony may be seen as ritual participation in the expression of a collective commitment to education as a valued activity. By attending the ceremony, young people have their own dedication to schoolwork reinforced.

Nearly half of the respondents (48%) said that they had attended this yearly ceremony at least once. Over a third (37%) said that they had attended twice or more. If this is a ritual that reinforces a commitment to learning, then we may expect that those who participate in this ritual will show greater degrees of commitment.

Sibling Cooperation on Schoolwork

Caplan et al. (1992) have argued, based on their studies of Vietnamese children, that the values and perceptions of young Vietnamese that lead to success in school are based on cooperative systems of family relations brought to the U.S. from the homeland. These systems of family

relations do not simply shape the attitudes of children toward education, but they make the home a place that actively promotes learning. "After dinner, the table is cleared," Caplan et al. write of a Vietnamese home, "and homework begins. The older children, both male and female, help their younger siblings. Indeed, they seem to learn as much from teaching as from being taught" (Caplan et al., 1992: 39-40).

Most of my informants regarded cooperative relations among family members as characteristic of Vietnamese, as opposed to American, family relations. These kinds of relations were regarded as products of the entire community: young people who gave help to their siblings were said to be seen by neighbors and other adults as fulfilling obligations toward their brothers and sisters; those who did not give help were seen as neglecting their obligations.

If sibling cooperation does result from the encouragement of the community as a whole, then we may see these kinds of cooperative relations as one way in which ethnic community involvement may promote the academic achievement of young Vietnamese Americans. Despite this view of sibling cooperation as a Vietnamese trait, however, almost one-third of respondents who had older siblings reported that their older siblings "never" helped them with their schoolwork (those who said that they had no older siblings were recorded as missing values for this variable). Still, a majority of young people (54.3%) said that their siblings "sometimes" helped them, and almost one and half out of every ten respondents (14%) said that their older siblings "usually" or "always" helped them.

Respondents tended to report more help given to siblings than help received from siblings. This may reflect a very slight tendency by respondents to magnify their own virtues while minimizing those of their brothers and sisters. Only about 14% of respondents said that they "never" helped their siblings, while one-third (33.4%) said that they "usually" or "always" helped their siblings.

"Deviant" Behavior

In addition to supports that may be provided by the ethnic community, a community may promote positive outcomes by steering young people away from troubled behavior. If a community is an island surrounded by a disadvantaged segment of American society, then we can see quite clearly how staying within this island may be related to lower rates of "deviant" behavior.

The survey data contains three indicators of "deviant" behavior on the part of young people: the number of times that young people have been stopped by the police, the number of times that they have used alcohol to the point of intoxication, and the number of times that they have used illegal drugs. Most of the respondents (78%) reported that they had never been stopped by the police. The distribution has the shape of a backwards "J", declining to 7% for those that said they had been stopped only once and to 3% for those who said they had been stopped two or three times, and then climbing to 6% for those who said they had been stopped four or five times and to just over 7% for those who said they had been stopped more than five times.

Alcohol abuse shows a similar, but somewhat more dramatic distribution, with the category of "never" having been drunk being the modal category (77%) and having been drunk more than five times being the second-largest category (15%). This is even more striking in the case of drug use, where 89% of respondents said they had never used drugs and 9% said they had used drugs more than five times. It would appear that the more serious the "deviant" activity, the more likely it is that the respondents have reported either no engagement or heavy engagement.

Association with Deviant Groups

In addition to a measure of individual students' own "deviant" behavior, I have also included a measure of the extent to which they associate with young people who might be considered "deviant." Association with deviant groups, here, is closely connected to engagement

in deviant behavior, particularly if these young people can be categorized as "good kids" and "bad kids". Still, the behavior of associates is conceptually distinct from individuals' own behavior and it may be worthwhile, at least initially, to consider these as two different matters. There are two measures of association with deviant groups in the survey data: the number of friends that have been stopped by the police and the number of friends that have been drunk.

A majority of respondents (60%) said that none of their friends had been stopped by the police and about 30% said that more than four of their friends had had confrontations with the police. Most of the respondents (62%) reported that none of their friends had ever been drunk. Almost one-third (32%), however said that four or more of their friends had been drunk.

Relationships Among Expected Influences on Academic Achievement, Ethnic Community Involvement, Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College

Table 9.2 presents zero-order correlations among the expected influences, ethnic community involvement, average grades, time spent on homework, and perceived importance of college. The results are as we might predict. All of the "supports" are positively related to each other and the "supports" are generally negatively related to "deviant" behavior and to association with deviant associates. The supports are not very strongly related to each other, but help given to siblings is fairly strongly related to help received from siblings ($r = .356$). All of the supports, participation in after-school classes, attendance at the awards ceremony, and help given to siblings and received from siblings, are positively related to ethnic involvement and to grades, time spent on homework, and perception of the importance of college. The measures of deviant behavior are very strongly related to each other. They are also strongly associated with having deviant friends. The measures of deviant behavior are negatively related to community involvement and to grades, homework time, and perceptions of the importance of college.

Table 9.2. Relationships Among Expected Influences on Academic Achievement, Ethnic Community Involvement, Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	After-school Classes	Awards	Help given	Help received
Times at awards ceremony	.214**			
Help given to siblings	.234**	.208**		
Help received from siblings	.166**	.191**	.356**	
Times stopped by police	-.137**	-.148**	-.268**	-.180**
Times drunk	-.152**	-.179**	-.317**	-.268**
Times used drugs	-.171**	-.166**	-.305**	-.245**
Friends stopped by police	-.024	-.103	-.206**	-.235**
Friends drunk	-.079	-.086	-.201**	-.268**
Ethnic involvement	.327**	.222**	.276**	.217**
Average grades	.347**	.214**	.360**	.318**
Time on homework	.234**	.241**	.312**	.222**
Perceived importance of college	.241**	.128*	.293**	.223**

	Times stopped	Times drunk	Times used drugs	Friends stopped
Times drunk	.641**			
Times used drugs	.587**	.676**		
Friends stopped by police	.432**	.358**	.255**	
Friends drunk	.534**	.607**	.453**	.543**
Ethnic involvement	-.368**	-.395**	-.374**	-.287**
Average grades	-.453**	-.473**	-.484**	-.235**
Time on homework	-.425**	-.425**	-.394**	-.302**
Perceived importance of college	-.405**	-.436**	-.453**	-.261**

(Table con'd)

	Friends drunk	Ethnic inv.	Grades	Homework
Ethnic involvement	-.319**			
Average grades	-.339**	.572**		
Time on homework	-.326**	.476**	.527**	
Perceived importance of college	-.360**	.403**	.508**	.434**

** P < .01

Influences on Academic Achievement and the Role of Ethnic Community Involvement

Table 9.3 presents the influence of participation in after-school classes on grades, homework time, and perceived importance of college attendance, and considers to what extent this influence may be attributed to the relationship between attendance in after-school classes and involvement in the ethnic community. Model 1 in this table leaves ethnic community involvement out of the equation. Model 2 leaves after-school classes out of the equation. Model 3 includes both after-school classes and ethnic community involvement.

Attending after-school classes are positively related to grades and these classes account for about 12% of the variance in grades, when we take no other variables into account. When we include the measure of involvement in the ethnic community, however, we see that involvement in the ethnic community is a much more powerful influence and that the standardized coefficient for after school classes decreases from .343 to .172. After-school classes do have a positive influence on grades that is independent of community involvement, but a large part of the relationship between these classes and grades may be attributed to the relationship between participation in after school classes and ethnic community involvement.

The coefficient for ethnic community involvement hasdecreased somewhat to .510 from the bivariate coefficient of .568. This suggests that some small part of the influence of community involvement on grades may be due to the fact that this community involvement promotes participation in classes, but only a very small part. Since the correlation between ethnic involvement and after-school classes, shown in Table 9.2, is .327, the indirect effect of community involvement through after-school classes would be only .056. This is as we might expect, since the ways in which a social group may influence young people are complex and varied and formal classes are only one of the many ways of promoting an outcome.

Table 9.3. Influence of Attendance at After-School Classes on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
After-School Classes	.343**		.172**
Ethnic Involvement		.568**	.510**
R^2	.118	.322	.348
Time on Homework			
After-School Classes	.233**		.083
Ethnic Involvement		.473**	.445**
R^2	.054	.224	.230
Perceived Importance of College			
After-School Classes	.263**		.144**
Ethnic Involvement		.402**	.354**
R^2	.069	.161	.180

** $p < .01$

The influences of participation in after-school classes on time spent on homework and perception of college importance follow a similar pattern. Part of the influence of these classes in both cases is attributable to the relationship with ethnic community involvement. Only a small portion of the effect of community involvement, however, is apparently due to these classes. Therefore, we should not see such classes are the primary avenue of influence of community involvement.

Table 9.4 considers how school performance may be affected by exposure to programs that encourage academic excellence, specifically by the number of times young people have attended the yearly awards ceremony. Once again, Model 1 looks only at the influence of attendance at the yearly awards ceremony, Model 2 presents the influence of ethnic community involvement for clear comparison, and Model 3 presents both attendance at the awards ceremony and ethnic community involvement.

Attendance at the awards ceremony accounts for only a very small portion of the variance in grades, although it does have a positive and significant relationship to grades. The bivariate relationship between ethnic community involvement and grades is different from the coefficient seen above because of missing values in the awards ceremony variable. Once again, in Model 3, we see that the coefficient of the expected influence, this time attendance at the awards ceremony, declines quite a bit (and becomes statistically insignificant), while the coefficient for ethnic community involvement declines only slightly and remains quite large. The influence of attendance at the awards ceremony on grades would appear to be a result of the fact that ethnic community involvement leads to attendance at the ceremony and is related to higher grades.

Part of the positive relationship between participation in the awards ceremony and time spent on homework is independent of ethnic community involvement, but, again, we see that part of the bivariate relationship between participation in these ceremonies and effort on schoolwork is spurious: it is due to the fact that ethnic community

Table 9.4. Influence of Attendance at the Yearly Awards Ceremony on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
Awards ceremony	.208**		.084
Ethnic involvement		.589**	.570**
R^2	.043	.346	.353
Time on Homework			
Awards ceremony	.231**		.133**
Ethnic involvement		.480**	.451**
R^2	.053	.230	.246
Perceived Importance of College			
Awards ceremony	.131**		.042
Ethnic involvement		.418**	.408**
R^2	.017	.174	.176

** $p < .01$

involvement is related to both awards ceremony participation and homework time. The indirect effect of ethnic community involvement on homework time through awards ceremony participation would be only .030. The relationship between ceremony participation and perceived importance of college is also largely attributable to the relationship of both of these with ethnic community involvement. Ethnic community involvement, in turn, appears to have little influence on perceptions of importance of college through the awards ceremony.

Both after-school classes and attendance at the awards ceremony are highly specific ways in which schoolwork might be influenced. Cooperative patterns of relationships among siblings, however, is much more general in nature. Table 9.5 looks at how sibling cooperation on homework might influence school performance, and at how the relationship between sibling cooperation and school performance might be related to ethnic community involvement. I have here added together the significantly correlated variables of help received from siblings and help given to siblings to produce a single measure of sibling cooperation in Vietnamese American households. In Model 1, we see that sibling cooperation has a strong positive effect on grades (ß=.435). The influence of ethnic involvement, in Model 2, appears stronger than in other tables because of missing values due to students lacking younger or older siblings or not giving a response to this item. Again, it would appear that part of the relationship between sibling cooperation and grades is due to the relationship between ethnic community involvement and sibling cooperation. I would interpret this as meaning that involvement in the ethnic community promotes cooperation among siblings and leads to better grades. If we accept, though, that ethnic community involvement does promote cooperative relationships, as I have argued above, then it does appear that these cooperative relationships can be a way in which the ethnic community leads to achievement. The coefficient of the influence of community involvement on sibling

Table 9.5. Influence of Sibling Cooperation on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
Sibling cooperation	.435**		.248**
Ethnic involvement		.615**	.528**
R^2	.189	.379	.433
Time on Homework			
Sibling cooperation	.374**		.218**
Ethnic involvement		.518**	.441**
R^2	.140	.269	.310
Perceived Importance of College			
Sibling cooperation	.367**		.215**
Ethnic involvement		.503**	.427**
R^2	.134	.253	.294

** $p < .01$

cooperation is ß = .354. This means that the indirect effect of community involvement on grades through sibling cooperation would be ß = .088 (i.e.,.248*.354).

Time on homework and perceived importance of college show results similar to grades. Sibling cooperation does have an influence on both of these that is independent of ethnic community involvement, but a statistically significant portion of the influence of sibling cooperation on both homework time and college perception (ß = .156, and ß = .151, respectively) appears to be spurious and attributable to the fact that ethnic community involvement promotes cooperation and school efforts and attitudes toward future education. The indirect effects of community involvement on homework time and perceptions of importance of college through sibling cooperation are ß = .077 and ß = .076, respectively.

All three of these forms of support provided by the community, then, do appear to significantly influence grades, effort on schoolwork, and attitudes toward future education. However, the indirect influence of community involvement through each of these forms of support (that is, the extent to which students who are more closely tied to the ethnic community do better, work harder, and make educational plans *because* the community provides them with educational programs or celebratory rituals or promotes cooperation) is very small. It is worth remembering, though, that these are only some of the forms of community support. It would be very difficult to quantify, for example, day-to-day expressions of encouragement and approval that community members might bestow on young people.

Support is also only part of the story. In the segmented assimilation argument, ethnic communities do not promote achievement and upward mobility on the part of their young people only by providing them with social supports. More importantly, ethnic communities act as alternatives to the disadvantaged segments of American society into which young people might assimilate. This is to say that being involved in

these communities keeps young people from adopting forms of behavior and attitudes resulting from the unequal structure of contemporary American society that might deflect them from upward mobility.

I have suggested above that substance abuse and confrontations with police are indicators of problematic behavior, and that these are associated with assimilation into the local American youth culture. Because these are so highly correlated, I have combined them into a single measure of "deviant" behavior. Table 9.6 shows how the resulting index of deviant behavior is related to grades, homework time, and perceived importance of college. Deviant behavior has a powerful negative effect on grades and by itself accounts for about 30% of all the variance in grades. Since the relationship between ethnic community involvement and the index of deviant behavior is ß = -.428,a significant portion of the relationship between deviant behavior and grades (.175) is spurious; it is attributable to the fact that ethnic community involvement makes it less likely that young people will engage in problematic behavior and makes it more likely that young people will get good grades. But a significant portion of the influence of ethnic community involvement on grades (-.428 * -.370 = .158) is indirect, through the behavior variable. This provides evidence that one of the ways in which the ethnic community leads to academic success is by steering them away from problematic behavior.

Ethnic community involvement is also related to increased homework time and increased perceptions of the importance of college through its negative relationship with deviant behavior. The indirect effect of this involvement on homework time is ß = .149 and the indirect effect on perception of the importance of college is ß = .169. These results, then, appear to be consistent with the argument that assimilation in underprivileged neighborhoods, in the current structure of American society, is a source of problems for young people in an immigrant minority and that an ethnic community can help young people bypass this

Table 9.6. Influence of Deviant Behavior on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
Deviant behavior	-.545**		-.370**
Ethnic involvement		.568**	.409**
R^2	.298	.322	.434
Time on Homework			
Deviant behavior	-.469**		-.327**
Ethnic involvement		.473**	.333**
R^2	.220	.224	.311
Perceived Importance of College			
Deviant behavior	-.495**		-.396**
Ethnic involvement		.402**	.232**
R^2	.245	.162	.290

** $p < .01$

detrimental assimilation in achieving eventual upward mobility. Association with deviant friends is, both conceptually and statistically, closely connected to deviant behavior, although the direction of causation between engaging in deviant behavior and having deviant friends is difficult to establish (do young people engage in problematic behavior because their friends do or do problem adolescents seek out problem friends?).

I have created a measure of association with deviant friends by combining responses to questions regarding how many of respondents' friends have used alcohol to the point of intoxication and how many friends have been stopped by police. Before combining this measure with the measure of deviant behavior, I would like to look separately at its influence on academic success and related issues, in Table 9.7.

Associating with deviant friends does have a significant negative effect on grades, homework time, and perceptions of the importance of college. Some of the effect of associating with deviant friends on these scholastic phenomena appears to be spurious, a result of the fact that those who are more integrated into the ethnic group are less likely to have deviant friends and those who are more integrated into the group are, for reasons other than those embodied in the measurement of deviant friends, more likely to do well in school, spend time on schoolwork, and set their sights on college. The indirect effects of ethnic involvement on the school variables through the friendship groups are rather small. The coefficient for the relationship of ethnic community involvement and deviant friendship groups is -.337, so the indirect effect of ethnic involvement on grades is .055, on homework time is .076, and on perceptions of college attendance is .083

Because deviant behavior and associations with deviant groups are so closely related, both conceptually and statistically, they may be combined into a general measure of "deviance," that takes into account both the undesirable activities of individuals and those of their

Table 9.7. Influence of Deviant Associations on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
Deviant associations	-.337**		-.164**
Ethnic involvement		.568**	.512**
R^2	.114	.322	.346
Time on Homework			
Deviant associations	-.360**		-.226**
Ethnic involvement		.473**	.397**
R^2	.130	.224	.269
Perceived Importance of College			
Deviant associations	-.354**		-.247**
Ethnic involvement		.402	.319**
R^2	.126	.162	.216

** $p < .01$

friends. Table 9.8 considers how this more comprehensive measure may be related to academic performance, efforts, and ambitions. The coefficient of ethnic community involvement and this new measure of deviance is -.470. This means that, apart from the direct effect of ethnic involvement on grades, it has an indirect effect through lessening the likelihood of associating with problem friends and engaging in problem behavior of ß = .161. It has an indirect effect on time spent on homework of ß = .134. The indirect effect on perception of college importance is the strongest, with a coefficient of .209.

Ethnic community involvement, then does appear to be positively related to factors likely to lead to academic achievement and upward mobility and negatively related to factors likely to inhibit academic achievement and upward mobility. Part of the relationship of each expected influence on grades, homework time, and perceptions of college attendance has appeared to be spurious when we take ethnic community involvement into account. The best interpretation of this finding is that a community consists of a complex of supports and controls, many of which arenot readily measurable. Therefore, when we find for example, that part of the relationship of participation in after-school classes and scholastic performance is spurious, this means that the classes themselves are not the whole explanation for the reason that those who go to them tend to be better. It may be that those who attend these classes are more subject to the approval or gossip of neighbors and it is this approval or gossip that promotes achievement.

The indirect effects of ethnic community involvement through most of the expected influences are rather small. This is consistent with the view that the community directs the behavior of these young people in numerous small and subtle ways: it is the cumulative effect of small influences that counts, rather than any one factor. However, we have seen that the negative relationship of involvement in the ethnic community with behavior likely to detract from school performance has a

Table 9.8. Influence of Deviant Behavior and Deviant Associations on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	ß	ß	ß
Average Grades			
"Deviance"	-.569**		-.342**
Ethnic involvement		.568**	.482**
R^2	.324	.322	.505
Time on Homework			
"Deviance"	-.471**		-.286**
Ethnic involvement		.473**	.395**
R^2	.222	.224	.344
Perceived Importance of College			
"Deviance"	-.581**		-.444**
Ethnic involvement		.402	.292**
R^2	.337	.162	.404

** $p < .01$

particularly notable effect. I would not want to claim that therefore the social controls exercised by the community are more important than the social supports. The indicators are necessarily too imperfect to put much faith in this type of comparison. Moreover, the controls and supports are parts of the same system: if the ethnic community offers an alternative to a segment of American society plagued by problems for young people, the community can only lessen the likelihood that young people will associate with problem friends, get into legal problems, and engage in substance abuse by offering another set of social affiliations, behaviors, and activities.

Still, the prominence of lessening "deviant" behaviors as a way in which ethnic community involvement is related to scholastic matters is consistent with the segmented assimilation argument. If we read these results in the context of the qualitative description provided above, the interpretation seems quite clear. In this community, assimilation, whether cultural or structural, means assimilation into the troubled youth culture of a disadvantaged segment of American society. Those who remain tightly integrated within this immigrant island run fewer risks of being trapped in a persistent state of disadvantage.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has attempted to address the difficult issue of why involvement in an ethnic community is associated with high levels of performance in school, time spent on schoolwork, and ambitions for future education. It has described those expected influences on these matters that it is possible to measure. All of these expected influences are related to school performance, efforts, and attitudes. Part of the relationship of each is spurious, which is interpreted as meaning that there are other influences, related to ethnic community involvement, on school behaviors and attitudes. Ethnic community involvement has only small indirect effects through each of these expected influences, but it is argued that this is consistent with the view that the community

directs young people through the cumulative effects of many forms of supports and controls. The most notable way in which involvement in the ethnic community is related to school outcomes is through the negative effects of community involvement on measures of deviance. It is argued that this is consistent with the segmented assimilation view that immigrant communities can promote the upward mobility of their young by offering alternatives to assimilation into troubled segments of American society.

Chapter 10. The Vietnamese Family and the Ethnic Community

Others who have studied the adaptation of Vietnamese youth to American society have placed a heavy emphasis on the Vietnamese family, attributing the apparent success of Vietnamese American students to the qualities of their families. Caplan and his co-authors (Caplan, Whitmore and Choy, 1992; Caplan, Choy and Whitmore 1991; Caplan, Choy and Whitmore, 1989) have argued that the scholastic success of Vietnamese American students is due to the values of hard work and dedication to learning conveyed by Vietnamese American families to their young. My own argument, however, focuses not on the individual family, but on the community. I have been maintaining that it is integration into the ethnic community that primarily affects the adaptation to the school environment of young people in a Vietnamese American neighborhood.

Does this mean that I am claiming that only community involvement is important and that family characteristics are irrelevant? My general argument suggests that this would be an inaccurate way to view the matter. Families should be seen as crucial parts of the system of community relations. Individuals exist within families and families exist within communities. Thus, the same kinds of social supports and controls afforded to individuals, channeling behavior in particular directions, are also afforded to families, channeling relations among family members in particular directions.

If we think about families along these lines, we may expect an intimate connection between the structures of families and the integration of families into the surrounding pattern of social ties. Kibria (1993: 158-159) found that her Vietnamese American interviewees regarded traditional families as an essential part of their cultural identity. The ideal (or perhaps idealized) Vietnamese family consists not only of parents and children, but also of grandparents living under the same roof, and individuals living outside of traditional families are often seen as not adhering to the best pattern of behavior. "Intact"

families, that is, families composed of two-parents and that even contain grandparents may be expected to be more closely integrated into the ethnic community than other family types. Causation, arguably, flows in both directions. Those families that are more tightly interwoven into the surrounding social fabric are more likely to conform to social expectations, such as the expectation that parents should stay together and the expectation that grown children should support their elderly parents, than are families that are not so interlaced by social controls. On the other hand, families that do not fit community expectations, such as families headed by divorced women, will not meet general community expectations about the appropriate structure of families and therefore may meet with less acceptance. It is also reasonable to assume that those who choose to conform to family types approved by the ethnic community will tend also to value being parts of that community.

I have argued, above, that one of the functions of the family is to connect its members to the community system that surrounds the family. Thus, we should expect that much of the influence of the family on school outcomes, somewhat contrary to those who emphasize individual family traits, is due to the fact that some families link their young to the community more effectively than others. This means that we should expect that (1) much of the influence of family structure on school outcomes is due to the fact that some family structures connect young people to the community more effectively than others, (2) community influences on school outcomes are much greater than the influences of family structure, and (3) some of the influence of family structure on school outcomes is due to the fact that some types of families are themselves more fully integrated into the community than others.

Table 10.1 gives percentages and frequencies of family structures within the Vietnamese community and of parental membership in ethnic organizations, which I take to be one indicator of the extent to which families are integrated into the ethnic community. The percentage of two

Table 10.1. Percentages and Frequencies of Family Characteristics.

	%	N
Family Structure		
Mother and father	82.1	325
Father and stepmother	0.5	2
Mother and stepfather	1.8	7
Father only	1.3	5
Mother only	11.1	44
Grandparents only	0.5	2
Neither parent nor grandparent	1.0	4
Two parents and grandparent	15.2	60
Parental membership in ethnic organizations		
Parent member of no organizations	66.2	266
Parent member of 1 organizations	22.6	91
Parent member of 2 or more	11.2	45

parent families is very similar to the percentage obtained from the census data, presented in chapter 2. Over 82% of the students lived in families with their natural mothers and fathers. Only a few had stepparents in their homes. However, 11.1% lived with their mothers. 2 young people reported living in their grandparents' households and 4 reported living with neither parents nor grandparents, but with siblings, friends, or guardians. Of those who lived in two parent homes, 60, or 15.2% of the 396 students who completed this item also had grandparents in the home.

At this point, it is worth restating the fact that my data were drawn only from young people who were enrolled in school. Had school dropouts been included in the survey, there are reasons to believe that the numbers living in single-parent homes would have been greater.

One-third of respondents reported that either their fathers or their mothers were members of at least one Vietnamese organization (aside from the church) and over 11% said that their parents were members of two or more. This seems like a fairly high level of civic participation for a low-income neighborhood.

Table 10.2 presents zero-order correlations among family structure variables, parental involvement in ethnic community organizations, ethnic community involvement of students, average grades, time spent on homework, and perceived importance of college. I have left out the bottom portion of the correlations, showing relationships among ethnic community involvement and the school variables, since these relationships have already been presented.

Parental membership in ethnic organizations is coded into 3 categories, as shown in Table 10.1. The two-parent family variable is dichotomous, coded as 0 for those who do not live in two-parent families and as 1 for those who do. The two-parent plus grandparent variable overlaps with the other family variable, since it is coded as 0 for those who do not live in two-parent families, 1 for those who live in two-

Table 10.2. Zero-order Correlations of Family Structure, Parental Membership in Vietnamese Organizations, Ethnic Community Involvement of Students, Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	2 Parent Family	2 Parent Family + Grandparent	Parental Membership
2-Parent Family + Grandparent	.791**		
Parental Membership	.183**	.309**	
Ethnic Involvement	.237**	.240**	.300**
Average Grades	.208**	.238**	.294**
Time on Homework	.094	.131**	.260**
Perceived Importance of College	.195**	.203**	.175**

** $p < .01$

parent families but do not contain a grandparent, and 2 for two-parent families that contain a grandparent. In this way, we can see how taking the presence of grandparents in the family into account may contribute to our understanding of the effects of family structure.

By definition, of course, the two-parent and two-parent plus grandparent variables are highly correlated. Students who live in two-parent families are also more likely to have parents who are members of ethnic organizations. This may be for mathematical reasons (if one has two parents, the probability of at least one being a member should be greater), or it may be that parents who have a spouse to help with children and duties have more time to go to meetings. Even if these are the explanations, however, it still appears that two-parent families are, for whatever reason, more involved in the life of the community through organizations than are other types of families.

Students who live in two-parent families show higher levels of involvement in the ethnic community than those who do not live in two-parent families. This is consistent with the argument that "intact" families link young people more effectively to the surrounding ethnic social system than do other types of families. Being in a two-parent families is positively associated with all of the school variables, although the association is not statistically significant in the case of time spent on homework.

The second column presents correlations with the family structure variable, with presence of grandparents included to represent a "higher" level of family structure. This is done because the literature (see, for example, Muzny, 1989: 42-43) and my own interviews with Vietnamese Americans during this study and observations of Vietnamese families over the past ten years indicate that multi-generational families as seen by Vietnamese as more "traditional" than families that just have two parents. Thus, this variable is now a measure of how "traditional" the family structure is, with not having both parents in a home as the lowest

level of traditional family structure, having both parents but no grandparents the next level, and having both parents and at least one grandparent the highest level. It is also worth noting that older people are generally seen as carriers of Vietnamese culture, so that young people who have daily contact with a grandparent may have a greater sense of their own ethnic distinctiveness.

When the family structure variable is coded to take the presence of grandparents into account, family structure shows a stronger relationship with parental membership in ethnic organizations. This supports the view that the more traditional the structure of the family, the closer the connections of the family to the ethnic community. One could suggest, also, that parents in families that have more adult family members, such as grandparents, can spare more time to be involved in civic activities. The zero-order correlation of family structure with all of the school variables also becomes somewhat stronger when the presence of grandparents in the home is taken into consideration.

Parental membership in ethnic organizations shows a positive relationship with respondents' own involvement in the ethnic community. This is consistent with the argument that young people in families that are more closely tied to the ethnic social system themselves tend to be closely tied to that social system. Parental membership is also positively related to all of the school variables. This may simply mean that young people with active, interested parents do better than young people with parents who do not have the interest or time to take part in organizational activities. The analysis below, however, should tell us whether it is simply that having active parents promotes favorable outcomes, or whether it is that having parents who are active in the local Vietnamese social network links students to that network, which, in turn, results in favorable outcomes.

Table 10.3 considers, first, how two-parent family structure influences the school variables, second, how parental involvement in the

Table 10.3. Influences of Two-parent Family Structure, Parental Membership in Ethnic Organizations, and Ethnic Community Involvement on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Average Grades	ß	ß	ß
Two-Parent Family	.220**	.174**	.076
Parental Membership		.256**	.116**
Ethnic Involvement			.514**
R^2	.048	.112	.342**
Homework Time			
Two-Parent Family	.106**	.064	-.021
Parental Membership		.241**	.121**
Ethnic Involvement			.441**
R^2	.011	.068	.237
Perceived Importance of College			
Two-Parent Family	.200**	.172**	.103**
Parental Membership		.158**	.060
Ethnic Involvement			.360**
R^2	.040	.064	.177

** $p < .01$

ethnic community changes the relationship between family structure and the school variables, and, third, how respondents' own involvement in the ethnic community changes the associations of both two-parent family structure and parental membership with the school variables.

In the first column of this table, we see that living in a two-parent family has significantly positive influences on grades, time spent on homework, and on perceived importance of college. It does not, by itself, explain a great deal of variation in any of these school outcomes. When parental membership in ethnic organizations is entered into the equations, as shown in the second column, the coefficient of the family structure variable declines for all three of these dependent variables. Although parental membership accounts for only a small portion of the variation in all three of these dependent variables, it does account for more variation in grades and homework time than does family structure.

The third column, Model 3, indicates that most of the influence of two-parent family structure can be accounted for by the association of two parent family structure with increased involvement in the ethnic community. We see here that most of the effect of family structure on school outcomes is indirect. The direct effect of two-parent family structure on grades is only .076, while the indirect effect, through increased parental involvement in ethnic organizations and through increased on the part of the students themselves is .144. Most of the indirect effect on students' grades is through the tendency of students in two-parent families to be more closely tied to the community: the indirect effect of two-parent family structure through respondents' own ethnic community involvement (both by increasing this involvement directly and through increasing the likelihood of parental membership in ethnic organizations) comes to .123. Accordingly, we also see that taking community involvement into consideration greatly increases the coefficient of determination. Not only do two-parent families apparently

lead to higher grades mostly by increasing the ties of their children to the community, but the ties to the community also explain more of the differences in grades than does family structure.

In the case of time spent on homework, the coefficient of two-parent family structure actually becomes negative (albeit very slight and not statistically significant by the conventional standards) when both parental membership and student community involvement are considered. Again, we see that community involvement, both on the part of young people and their parents does have a greater influence on homework time than does family structure.

"Intact" family structure does seem to have more of an influence on perceived importance of college than does parental membership. The indirect effect of two-parent family structure on perceptions of importance of college through increasing ethnic community involvement is rather small (.086) compared to indirect effects on grades and homework time. Still, the students' own involvement in the ethnic community does appear to be the most important factor, as indicated by the standardized coefficient and by the increase in the coefficient of determination.

There are many reasons why a two-parent family might have a positive influence on school outcomes. It may be that these kinds of families can control their young people more effectively, or that having both parents as role-models provides a better basis for psychological development. The explanatory importance of ethnic community involvement seen above, however, suggests that the part played by this type of family arrangement in a social context may provide a better explanation than these psychological reasons. Two-parent families "fit" their children into the entire community more effectively than other types of families and it is this "fit" that promotes positive scholastic outcomes.

As I have discussed above, in Vietnamese communities two-parent families are seen as more "traditional" (i.e., fitting into the accepted pattern of social relations) than are one-parent families and two-parent,

Table 10.4. Influences of "Traditional" Family Structure, Parental Membership in Ethnic Organizations, and Ethnic Community Involvement on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Average Grades	ß	ß	ß
"Traditional" Family	.251**	.177**	.080
Parental Membership		.230**	.104**
Ethnic Involvement			.514**
R^2	.061	.110	.342**
Homework Time			
"Traditional" Family	.151**	.078	-.005
Parental Membership		.227**	.200**
Ethnic Involvement			.437**
R^2	.023	.069	.236
Perceived Importance of College			
"Traditional" Family	.217**	.175**	.106**
Parental Membership		.133**	.044
Ethnic Involvement			.361**
R^2	.047	.063	.177

** $p < .01$

multiple-generation families are seen as even more "traditional." If, then, it is the traditional nature of the family, in the sense of how well the structure of the family fits an accepted pattern, that accounts for the influence of family structure on school outcomes, then we should expect that including the presence of grandparents in the home, as a third level of "traditionalism," should provide a somewhat better explanation of school outcomes.

In Table 10.4, we see that when presence of grandparents is added to the family structure variable as a third level, we do in fact, explain slightly more variation for each of the dependent variables. Although there are other explanations for this increase in explained variation, this is consistent with the idea that "traditional" families "fit" better into the Vietnamese community and the fitting into the social network is the reason that young people in some types of families tend to do better in school. Once again, we see that when we take parental and student ties to the ethnic community into consideration, "traditional" family structure has only a weak influence on grades, virtually no influence on time spent on homework, and only a relatively weak influence on perceptions of the importance of college.

These results support the argument that the academic performance and scholastic efforts and attitudes of Vietnamese American students are not simply matters of influences of individual families. Vietnamese American families exist in the context of Vietnamese American social relations. This does not mean that these families do not convey values or habits that might lead to scholastic success (see Zhou and Bankston, 1994). But it does mean that families should not be considered as isolated units.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has looked at how family structure and parental involvement in the ethnic community are related to the academic success of Vietnamese American students. It considers a common explanation of the

academic success of Vietnamese American students: that the success is due to their family lives. This might be seen as an alternative to my own community involvement explanation. However, survey results indicate that much of the influence of family structure on school outcomes is due to the fact that young people in some types of families tend to have parents who are more closely tied to the ethnic community and tend to be more tied to the ethnic community themselves. These findings imply that some types of family structures connect young people more effectively to the surrounding ethnic social environment. It is suggested that more "traditional" Vietnamese families are more integrated into their social environments and therefore serve to integrate their children more effectively.

Chapter 11. Recency of Arrival

The previous chapters have shown (1) that involvement in the ethnic community is positively related to academic success and related school outcomes, (2) that expected influences on school outcomes are related to school outcomes in a manner consistent with the segmented assimilation approach to immigrant youth adaptation, and (3) that Vietnamese American families appear to influence the adaptation of young people by linking young people to the surrounding ethnic community, rather than simply by acting as isolated carriers of cultural values. Now, I would like to consider how recency of arrival affects the adaptation of young people to the school environment.

From the perspective of traditional assimilation theory, recency of arrival should be negatively related to the adaptation of young people. Those who have entered the U.S. more recently have had less time to adopt the ways of the host society. From the perspective of human capital theory, also, recency of arrival should have a negative effect, since the more recently arrived have had less time to develop the skills for dealing with the host society environment.

From a social capital perspective, though, those who can make more use of the social resources around them should show greater success. Those who are more tightly bound in the ethnic social network will receive more social "resources", in the sense of supports for attitudes and behaviors likely to lead to upward mobility and constraints from attitudes and behaviors likely to deflect young people from upward mobility. Interpreting the idea of social capital in the light of segmented assimilation theory, when members of an immigrant group are in a relatively disadvantaged segment of American society, not only are those who are less interwoven into the ethnic network alienated from the supports and constraints of the network, but they also find themselves in a part of the host society environment that is not conducive to upward mobility.

If the version of the segmented assimilation-social capital approaches that I am suggesting here is correct, then, we could well see that recency of arrival actually has a *positive* influence on the adaptation of young people. If more recently arrived young people are more closely tied to the ethnic community, which is a source of advantages, and conversely less closely tied to the local society surrounding the ethnic community, which is a source of disadvantages, then we should expect that more recent arrivals can actually do better in school. Their superior performance, however, should disappear when we control for ethnic community involvement, since it is not recency of arrival per se that leads to academic achievement, but the fact that recent arrivals are more closely tied to their ethnic community.

Table 11.1 shows percentages and frequencies of years of arrival in the United States of Vietnamese American students in New Orleans East. The modal category (43.3%) is "U.S. born," and another 11.2% arrived between the summer of 1975, when Vietnamese began arriving in New Orleans, and 1980. This is consistent with the Census figures on arrival given in Chapter 2, which showed that about 60% of the foreign-born persons in the tract where the Vietnamese are located arrived in the late 1970's.

Thus, the majority of these young people were either born to those early arrivals, or arrived with their parents as small children. Another 15% came between the years 1981 and 1985, when most of the ninth-graders would have been aged about 2 to 6 and most of the twelfth-graders would have been aged about 5 or 6 to 9 or 10. Another 12% came between 1986 and 1990, when most ninth-graders would have aged 7 to 11 and most twelfth-graders would have been aged about 10 to 13. Another 19% are recent-arrivals, having come to the United States after 1990. Thus, most of these young people have either never lived outside of the U.S. or have only vague memories of life outside the U.S., but there is substantial variation in recency of arrival.

Table 11.1. Percentages and Frequencies of Years of Arrival of Vietnamese American Students in New Orleans East.

	%	N
U.S. Born	43.3	174
1975-1980	11.2	45
1981-1985	14.7	59
1986-1990	11.9	48
After 1990	18.9	76

Table 11.2. Influence of Recency of Arrival of Vietnamese American Students on Average Grades, Time Spent on Homework, and Perceived Importance of College.

	Model 1	Model 2
	ß	ß
Average Grades		
Recency of Arrival	.131*	-.102*
Ethnic Involvement		.607**
R^2	.017	.331
Homework Time		
Recency of Arrival	.300**	.139**
Ethnic Involvement		.420**
R^2	.090	.240
Perceived Importance of College		
Recency of Arrival	.178**	.027
Ethnic Involvement		.392**
R^2	.032	.162

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Table 11.2 shows the relationship of recency of arrival with the school variables and it shows how this relationship changes when we take involvement in the ethnic community into consideration. Looking at the bivariate relationships, it appears that more recently arrived students tend to make better grades, to spend more time on homework, and to see college attendance as more important than young people who have been in the U.S. longer or were U.S. born. This is contradictory to the results that we would expect from the perspective of traditional assimilation theory and, on the face of it, this seems somewhat paradoxical. If we take school performance, efforts on schoolwork, and attitudes toward future education as important aspects of the adaptation of young people to American society, it would appear that the longer young people stay in America, the less well they adapt to it. Model 2 offers some explanation of this paradox. Here, we see that when we control for involvement in the ethnic community, recency of arrival does show a negative association with grades. In other words, recency of arrival, in itself, is a liability in school, but the closer ties of more recently arrived young people to the ethnic community compensate for this liability. This finding, is of course, entirely consistent with the description of young Vietnamese Americans offered in Part II. The influence of ethnic community involvement becomes even stronger when we take into consideration the fact that many of those who are more closely bound to the community are recent arrivals who are hampered by their lack of familiarity with American society. Recency of arrival has a strong influence on homework time. Much of this influence is, again, due to the fact that more recently arrived students are more bound up in the ethnic social system. But recency of arrival also has an independent positive effect on time spent on homework. Controlling for community involvement, then, recent arrivals spend more time on homework but make poorer grades in schools. This makes sense, because the new arrivals, of course, would have less familiarity with the American school environment would have to

work harder to achieve levels of success similar to those of students born in the U.S. or who have resided here since early childhood.

The tendency of more recent arrivals to place greater importance on college attendance is almost entirely attributable to their greater involvement with the ethnic community. These results offer strong evidence for the argument that I am making, that involvement in an ethnic community, as opposed to assimilation in a disadvantaged segment of American society, can be a crucial asset for young people. It is such an asset that it turns what would otherwise be a problem, that is, being a newcomer in the United States, into a benefit.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the influence of recency of arrival on school performance, effort on schoolwork, and on attitudes toward education. It has found that, contrary to the expectations of traditional assimilation theory and to those of the human capital approach, recency of arrival actually has a positive influence on school outcomes. The positive influence of recency of arrival on grades is apparently due to the fact that more recently arrived young people are more closely tied to their ethnic community. Recent arrivals do tend to spend more time on schoolwork, even when we take community involvement into consideration, but this is apparently a result of the fact that they need to spend more time.

Conclusion

This dissertation has brought together a vast quantity of information, from intensive fieldwork, from census records and other data sources, and from a survey that I designed and administered to Vietnamese students in order to look at the specific questions of interest to me. I have presented an overview of contemporary Vietnamese Americans and a detailed description of a specific Vietnamese American community in order to understand the kind of environment in which contemporary Vietnamese American young people live. I have offered a look at the young people themselves, both in their community and in their schools. Finally, I have examined survey responses to see if the Vietnamese community really does function as a means of bypassing some of the problems of living in a disadvantaged part of American society, helping young people improve chances for upward mobility by improving their performance in school. To bring this work to a close, I would like, first, to describe my major findings; second, to delineate some of the contributions that this work makes to the theoretical literature on immigrant adaptation; third, to discuss what I believe are some of the practical implication of this study; and, fourth, to speculate on the future of this community and of the young people in it.

Major Findings

This dissertation has found, first, that the formation of a community, an interdependent set of people, has been a big part of the adaptation of this group of Vietnamese Americans to life in the United States. This community is characterized by cooperative economic relations that make possible the founding of new businesses, and a growth in home-ownership. In addition to informal social relations, the community has produced a variety of formal associations that facilitate collective action. Many of these formal organizations are aimed specifically at helping the performance of the young people of the community in American schools.

Second, we have seen that because this is such a closely interconnected social group, it is capable of exercising extensive social controls over young people, as well as capable of providing them with a variety of supports. These social controls greatly influence behavior and ambitions of young people, shaping the kinds of behavior they see as appropriate and the occupations they would like to pursue in later life.

Third, it has been found that the extent to which young people are involved in their own ethnic community is critical to their overall adaptation to American society. Those who tend to be outsiders to their own group, tend also to exhibit behaviors that are regarded as problematic by the larger American society. These outsiders seem to have taken on attitudes and forms of behavior of the local American youth culture. This not only deprives them of the supports of their elders, but it also leads their elders to label them, in a fashion that makes it difficult for them to enter fully into the life of the community.

Fourth, we have seen that their does appear to be a strong relationship between how deeply involved students are in their own ethnic community and how well they do in American schools. Those who show greater community involvement, on a number of indicators, tend to outperform others and to put more effort into their schoolwork, and they are more likely to set their sights on continuing their educations in the future.

Fifth, the data are consistent with the view that the highly interconnected community described in this dissertation does contribute to the advancement of its youth both through formal programs and through promoting constructive types of social relationships. However, the clearest way that we have seen the community contributing to educational development is by providing an alternative to the social problems that plague a socioeconomically underprivileged segment of American society. Those who are more involved with the ethnic group are less assimilated into the social setting immediately surrounding them. Ethnic community

involvement shows a strong negative association with engaging in "deviant" forms of behavior, which, in turn show a strong negative association with school performance, efforts, and attitudes.

Sixth, we have seen that individual family characteristics do not appear to provide an adequate explanation for the school performance of young Vietnamese Americans. While I would not want to discount the importance of families, families exist within wider sets of social relations. Thus, much of the influence of family on the school performance of young people appears to be a result of the fact that some forms of families are themselves more integrated into the ethnic community.

Theoretical Contributions

This dissertation has provided evidence that immigrant adaptation should not be seen as a purely individual process. In many cases, it is not just a matter of individuals arriving in a new country and adjusting to it. In the case of the Vietnamese, the new immigrants arrived as part of a social group and their ability to adapt to the new environment has depended, in part, on their ability to make use of relationships within this group. This is a striking contrast to traditional assimilation theory, in which immigrant adaptation is seen as a matter of individuals leaving their own ethnic groups and becoming absorbed in the larger society.

I have also demonstrated how a relatively new perspective on immigrant adaptation, the segmented assimilation perspective, may be utilized to understand the experiences of one of the newest American ethnic groups. The Vietnamese have largely settled in low-income neighborhoods and their immediate surroundings often offer them few opportunities. If members of this groups are to achieve upward mobility, they must rely on the advantages generated by their own social infrastructures. Other advantages are simply not available to them. Because the Vietnamese community here utilizes its social infrastructure

to improve life-chances for its young people, I have argued that the concept of social capital, that is, closed systems of relations that generate advantageous, cooperative behavior is relevant to understanding how a Vietnamese American community may produce benefits for its young people. However, I have argued that these benefits should be seen as relative to the social context that surrounds the communities. It is because there are so many dangers and problems for adolescents in lower income schools and neighborhoods that the Vietnamese community takes on so much value as an alternative.

In looking at variations among young people associated with differences in degree of involvement into the ethnic community, I have related immigrant adaptation to one of the oldest sociological concepts, that of social integration. Social integration implies both support from associates and social control. This means that young people who are more highly integrated into the community have greater access to the supports it can supply, both formal and informal, and they are more constrained. We have seen how, in terms of gender roles and in terms of the concept of "respect" among Vietnamese American young people, those who are more tightly bound into the group tend to be more constrained by the expectations of the group. Fulfilling these expectations leads the more "Vietnamese" young people to enjoy greater chances of winning favored positions in American society. Paradoxically, this even leads more recently arrived young people to be apparently better adapted to U.S. society than are the U.S. born.

Practical Implications

The interpretation of a Vietnamese American community that I have offered here is, I believe, not evidence for a laissez-faire approach to questions of ethnic stratification. It is not a case of "the Vietnamese are making it on their own, why can't other groups?" The *Dung Lac* program for at-risk Vietnamese youth, which I have suggested may be an effective way to approach some of the problems of young people, has

applied for and received government funding. This program, in fact, used some of the findings in the present study to apply for funding, so the study has already had a practical impact along these lines.

My interpretation does offer support for approaches to problems of ethnic stratification and other social issues that recognize the importance of immediate infrastructures, such as community, and the importance of looking at how those immediate infrastructures are related to the family, friendship, and business relations within them and to the macro-sociological structures around them.

On the issue of immigrant adaptation, in particular, this study suggests that immigrant communities can often be seen not only as survival strategies for the immigrants, but as social forms that can make contributions to American society. Far from being agents of "ghettoization," immigrant communities can actually help their members avoid some of the problems with which they are confronted by American society.

Where Do the Young Vietnamese Go?

Since the Vietnamese community is so new, it is risky, and perhaps more than a little presumptuous, to attempt to predict its future. Still, we may obtain some inkling of the likely future of this neighborhood by considering where its young people seem to be going and what their future connections to the neighborhood are likely to be. Is the Vietnamese community promoting its own self-destruction by propelling its youth into the American middle class?

Other ethnic communities, such as the Chinese community of New York, maintain themselves by continually drawing new immigrants who populate the centers to which group members who have moved out into surrounding suburbs remain connected (Zhou, 1992). Immigration from Vietnam, however, has slowed to a trickle by the present (1995). It is difficult to predict whether normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam will stop this immigration altogether.

Certainly, the American refugee program, which now consists of a few flights directly from Vietnam to the United States (the huge processing centers in Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia have already ceased functioning), will be eliminated. Since there are now so many Vietnamese Americans, it is possible that some immigration for purposes of family reunification may continue, depending on future emigration policies of Vietnam. But the large-scale influx of immigrants needed to sustain a first-generation residential core is unlikely ever to occur again.

The young people who emerge from this community are unlikely to retain many of the socioeconomic characteristics of their elders. As we have seen, most of the adults in this community have only limited human capital to enable them the adjust to life outside the residential enclave. As the younger people gradually become acculturated and incorporated into positions of higher status and greater advantage in the larger labor market, the original immigrant enclave could diminish or retain only a symbolic value as economically successful group members move out (Sandberg, 1974; Gans, 1979). Or, the enclave may become a continuously declining ghetto made up of only the least successful group members (Wilson and Aponte, 1985; Zhou and Bankston, 1992).

Many of the most noticeable characteristics of this community do seem likely to disappear or be greatly altered over the course of the next generation. Discussing the gardens that provide so many of the ethnic foods, spices, and folk medicines for this community, Airriess and Clawson (1994, p. 30) observed:

> Because the Versailles market gardens are associated exclusively with the elderly, we question the durability of the market garden landscape. Younger people may not want to engage in the labor-intensive, physically demanding work. The majority of the present gardeners hold this view of the future, but some believe, or at least allow themselves to hope, that the middle-aged generation of refugees will take up gardening because of the cultural importance of traditional foods.

Even if some of the middle-aged were to take up gardening, however, this would probably only delay the gardens' eventual disappearance.

Certainly, none of the young people I spoke with mentioned subsistence agriculture as a career goal. When I asked young people if they would like to eventually, perhaps in retirement, cultivate gardens in the manner of their grandparents and the older people, their answers were invariably that the work is too hard and too dirty.

It has been noted, also, that even within the first generation, there is a tendency for some successful members of the first generation to move westward into more affluent suburbs within convenient driving distance of the Versailles neighborhood. This tendency seems likely to continue in the future as upward mobility continues.

Indications of decline in some parts of the neighborhood have already become apparent. Specifically, the row of rental houses on the right side of Alcee Fortier that one passes after the commercial strip when driving away from Chef Menteur toward Dwyer contains several boarded-up, decaying units. These are owned by absentee landlords, and they have been left behind as the Vietnamese have moved into homes they own themselves on the west side of Alcee Fortier and on the north side of Dwyer Boulevard. It is possible that other parts of the neighborhood may decline as younger people move even further away.

My interviews with the young people suggest that many of them will continue to maintain strong connections to this neighborhood and that the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East is likely to become more diffuse over the course of the next century, but is likely to retain this particular area as both a commercial and cultural center. It will probably lose its function as a reception center and "safety net" for new immigrants, since it appears that relatively few new immigrants from Vietnam will be arriving.

Given the fairly low ranking that students gave to the occupation of "shop owner", it seems probable that without a new infusion of immigrants some Vietnamese stores will eventually begin to close because of a lack of manpower. Zhou and Bankston (forthcoming) have pointed out

that among all Asian groups rates of small-scale unemployment are much less for the U.S. born than they are for the foreign born. Working in stores owned by other Vietnamese is a fairly common occupation for those young Vietnamese referred to as "underadjusted" by counselor Joseph Vuong (see above), but many of these already work in stores outside of the residential enclave that serve other ethnic groups. As the Vietnamese community becomes more dispersed over the course of the first half of the next century, stores specializing in ethnic goods will continue to respond to demand, but these will have less need to remain in the Versailles neighborhood.

It is probable that the young Vietnamese who are now going off to universities will settle outside the community. Monsignor Dominic Luong has remarked that he finds it difficult to attract young college graduates, especially doctors, nurses, and lawyers, back to the neighborhood. A female college sophomore expressed a common view:

> I like to go there to visit, but I wouldn't want to go back there to live with my parents and all that. I'm proud of being Vietnamese, but I want to go off and have my own life.

On this issue, those born or reared in the U.S. appear to differ somewhat from upwardly mobile recent arrivals. The recent arrivals generally said that they would like to live in the vicinity of Versailles, if not in the neighborhood itself, in order to remain part of the ethnic society. The U.S.-born or U.S.-reared generally said that they would like to remain in the New Orleans area and would continue to maintain close ties to the Vietnamese neighborhood in Versailles, but that they would prefer to live outside of it for the sake of greater freedom.

The church complex at Mary Queen of Vietnam will continue to function as a cultural center, but its parishioners will come from further and further away, as the young people who are currently growing up in Versailles settle in the suburbs of the Greater New Orleans Area. The church complex is currently growing. A park that is part of this

complex is being built on the opposite side of Dwyer Boulevard and there are plans to put up new buildings on the church grounds. As this church receives support from an increasingly middle class Vietnamese American population settled around the New Orleans area, this trend is likely to continue, and the church will still be flourishing when the gardens are gone and there are only a few Vietnamese businesses left on Alcee Fortier.

The young Vietnamese Americans who have dropped out of school and become identified as outsiders do not face the prospect of social or geographic mobility. This suggests that some parts of the neighborhood will decline, as the rental houses along Alcee Fortier have declined, and that these young people will continue to reside in these areas. Ironically, it seems that those young people who currently have the closest connections to the Vietnamese community will eventually settle outside of it, while those who are currently the most marginal to this community will be the ones who continue to be bound to it.

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Appendix

Vietnamese High School Study

The following questionnaire is part of a study of students of Vietnamese background living in the New Orleans area. There are questions about your particular background and attitudes. Please circle one number or fill in the blank spaces as appropriate, and answer as thoughtfully and as honestly as possible. Thank you.

1. Sex
   1) Male
   2) Female

2. Age _____.

3. What grade are you in?
   1) 9th 2) 10th 3) 11th 4) 12th

4. How do you get home from school in the afternoon?
   1) In my own car
   2) In a friend's car
   3) With parents 4
   4) On the bus
   5) Other (specify) _____.

5. How important is going to college for you?
   1) I definitely do not want to attend college.
   2) It's not very important.
   3) Going to college is fairly important for me.
   4) Going to college is very important.

6. What is your religion?
   1) Catholic 2) Buddhist 3) Baptist 4) Cao Dai 5) Other (specify) _____.

7. How often do you go to your church or temple?
   1) never
   2) about once every year
   3) several times every year
   4) about once every month
   5) about once every week
   6) usually more than one time per week.

8. Some of the following jobs may apply to you more than others, but please indicate how happy would you be with each of the these jobs after you finish school.

Owner of a small store? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Fisherman? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Homemaker? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Waiter or waitress? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Photographer? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Medical doctor? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Nurse? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Cashier? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Accountant? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Engineer? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Teacher? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

Auto Mechanic? 1) very unhappy 2) unhappy 3) happy 4) very happy.

9. How would you prefer to describe yourself?
   1) Vietnamese 2) Vietnamese-American 3) American
   4) Other (specify) _____.

10. How many of your friends are Vietnamese?
   1) None 2) Very Few (less than 20%)
   3) Some (29% to 30) 4) About half (40% to 59%)
   5) Most (60% to 80%) 6) Almost all (more than 80%)

11. How many of your friends are white?
   1) None 2) Very Few (less than 20%)
   3) Some (29% to 30) 4) About half (40% to 59%)
   5) Most (60% to 80%) 6) Almost all (more than 80%)

12. How many of your friends are black?
   1) None 2) Very Few (less than 20%)
   3) Some (29% to 30) 4) About half (40% to 59%)
   5) Most (60% to 80%) 6) Almost all (more than 80%)

13. How well do you speak Vietnamese?
   1) Not at all 2) A little 3) fairly well
   4) very well

14. How often do you speak Vietnamese with your parents or guardians?
   1) Never 2) Seldom 3) Sometimes 4) Usually
   5) Always

15. How often do you speak Vietnamese with your brothers and sisters?
   1) Never 2) Seldom 3) Sometimes 4) Usually
   5) Alway 6) I have no brothers or sisters

16. How often do you speak Vietnamese with your friends?
   1) Never 2) Seldom 3) Sometimes 4) Usually
   5) Always

17. How well do you read Vietnamese?
   1) Not at all 2) A little 3) fairly well
   4) very well

18. How well do you write Vietnamese?
    1) Not at all 2) A little 3) fairly well
    4) very well

19. Would you prefer to marry someone who is Vietnamese, or someone who is not Vietnamese?
    1) I definitely want to marry someone who is not Vietnamese.
    2) I prefer to marry someone who is not Vietnamese.
    3) It isn't important to me whether I marry a Vietnamese or not.
    4) I prefer to marry someone who is Vietnamese.
    5) I definitely want to marry someone who is Vietnamese.
    6) I don't want to marry.

20. Do your parents prefer that you marry someone who is Vietnamese, or someone who is not Vietnamese?
    1) My parents definitely want me to marry someone who is not Vietnamese.
    2) My parents prefer that I marry someone who is not Vietnamese.
    3) It isn't important to my parents whether I marry a Vietnamese or not.
    4) My parents prefer that I marry someone who is Vietnamese.
    5) My parents definitely want me to marry someone who is Vietnamese.
    6) My parents don't want me to marry.

21. Have you ever attended Vietnamese language classes after school?
    1) no 2) yes

22. Have you ever attended English language classes after school?
    1) no 2) yes

23. Have you ever attended any other types of classes after school?
    1) no 2) yes (specify) _____.

24. What grade did you make in English (or ESL) last year?
    1) F 2) D 3) C 4) B 5) A

25. What grade did you make in math last year?
    1) F 2) D 3) C 4) B 5) A

26. What grade did you make in social studies last year?
    1) F 2) D 3) C 4) B 5) A

27. What grade do you make most often in school?
    1) F 2) D 3) C 4) B 5) A

28. Do you usually study alone or with friends?
    1) I always study alone.
    2) I usually study alone, but I occasionally study with friends.
    3) I study alone about half the time, and I study with friends about half the time.
    4) I usually study with friends, but I occasionally study alone.
    5) I always study with friends.
    6) I rarely study.

29. How much time do you usually spend on homework every day after school?
    1) I don't do homework 2) Less than thirty minutes
    3) Half an hour to an hour
    4) One to two hours 5) Over two hours.

30. Have you ever cheated on a test? 1) no
2) yes (how many times? _____)

31. How many older brothers do you have? _____.

Older sisters? _____.

32. How many younger brothers do you have? _____.

Younger sisters? _____.

33. How often do you help your younger brothers or sisters with their homework?
1) never 2) sometimes 3) often 4) always
5) Not Applicable

34. How often do your older brothers or sisters help you with your homework?
1) never 2) sometimes 3) often 4) always
5) Not Applicable

35. What grade have you made *most often* during the years you have been in school?
1) F 2) D 3) C 4) B 5) A

Now we're going to ask you about some things you might like or enjoy.

36. How much do you like each of the following after- school activities?

Reading? 1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much

Watching T.V.? 1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much

Hanging out with friends?
1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much

Helping parents around the house?
1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much

Playing sports? 1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much

Participating in school clubs?
1) Like very much 2) Like
3) Neither like nor dislike
4) Dislike 5) Dislike very much.

37. How much do you like to listen to each of the following types of music?

Rock? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much

Country/Western?
1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much

Rap? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Classical? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Traditional Vietnamese
Music? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

38. How much do you like each of the following styles in dress and grooming?

Long hair on boys?
1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Haircuts with geometric
designs? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Gold chains? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Nose rings? 1) like very much 2) like
3) neither like nor dislike
4) dislike 5) dislike very much.

Now we're going to ask you about a variety of good and bad experiences that you and your friends may have had.

39. Have you ever been stopped by the police?
1) no 2) yes (how many times?)_____

40. Have you ever been drunk?
1) no 2) yes (how many times?)_____

41. Have you ever used drugs?
1) no 2) yes (how many times?)_____

42. Have you ever attended the yearly awards ceremony for Vietnamese students?
1) no 2) yes (how many times?)_____

43. Have you ever won an award at this ceremony?
1) no 2) yes (how many times?)_____

44. Do you have a job?
1) no 2) yes (how many hours do you work per week) ____

45. Have any of your friends ever been stopped by the police?
1) no 2) yes (how many friends?) _____

46. Have any of your friends ever been drunk?
1) no 2) yes (how many friends?) _____

47. Have any of your friends ever won an award at the annual awards ceremony for Vietnamese students?
1) no 2) yes (how many friends?) _____

Now we're going to ask you a few questions about your family.

48. Where were you born?
1) New Orleans area.
2) Elsewhere in the U.S. (where?) _____ (what year did you arrive in New Orleans?) _____
3) Vietnam (specify city or village) _____
(what year did you arrive in the U.S.?)_____
(what year did you arrive in New Orleans?) _____
4) Elsewhere (where?)_____
(what year did you arrive in the U.S.?) _____
(what year did you arrive in New Orleans?) _____

49. Which parents do you live with?
1) mother and father 2) father only
3) mother only 4) father and stepmother
5) mother and stepfather
6) Neither mother nor father
(who do you live with?) _____.

50. Are any of your grandparents living with you?
1) no 2) yes

51. Are either of your parents members of the Vietnamese PTA ?
1) no 2) yes 3) don't know.

52. Are either of your parents members of the Vietnamese Educational Association?
1) no 2) yes 3) don't know.

53. Are your parents members of any other Vietnamese organizations?
1) no 2) yes (what organizations?) _____
3) don't know

54. What was the highest level of education completed by y o u r father?
1) less than high school 2) high school
3) some college
4) bachelor's degree from college
5) master's degree or higher.

55. What was the highest level of education completed by your mother?
1) less than high school 2) high school
3) some college
4) bachelor's degree from college
5) master's degree or higher.

56. How many hours per week does your father work outside the home?
1) none 2) less than 20 3) 20 to 40 hours per week
4) more than 40 hours per week.

57. How many hours per week does your mother work outside the home?
1) none 2) less than 20 3) 20 to 40 hours per week
4) more than 40 hours per week.

What would you be most likely to do in the following situations?

58. If you were studying for a test the following day and a friend asked for the your help in moving to a new house, how likely would you be to
a) help the friend instead of studying?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely
b) study instead of helping the friend?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely

59. If you noticed that a close friend at school was looking at your paper during tests, how likely would you be to
a) do nothing?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely
b) try to talk to your friend outside of class?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely
c) tell the teacher?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely

60. Suppose you needed to turn in a paper for a class, you had not been able to write this paper. If you found a paper by someone else on the same subject, how likely would you be to
a) hand in this paper as it is?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely
b) change the words in this paper and then hand it in to the teacher?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely
c) make an excuse and turn in no paper?
1) very unlikely 2) unlikely 3) likely 4) very likely

60. Thank you for your help and participation. Please write any comments you may have.

Vita

Carl L. Bankston III received the Bachelor of Science degree in sociology from Southern Methodist University and the Master of Arts degree in history, with a specialization in early medieval Europe, from the University of California at Berkeley. He served in the Peace Corps in Thailand from 1983 to 1985 and he worked as a supervisor in the Philippine Refugee Processing Center, a camp for refugees from Indochina, from 1985 until the end of 1989. During this time, he became interested in the adaptation of Southeast Asians to American society. After working briefly as an English teacher in the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East, he entered the doctoral program in sociology at Louisiana State University in 1990.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Carl L. Bankston III

Major Field: Sociology

Title of Dissertation: Ethnic Community Involvement and Academic Achievement Among Vietnamese American Secondary Schools Students: A Community Study

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

June 19, 1995